

Data Management Workgroup

Annual Progress Report: 2016

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Summary

2016 was a year of significant change for the Data Management Workgroup (DMWG). After the Monitoring Council's authorization to form a steering committee in February, the DMWG took steps to prepare informational materials and then assemble key influencers who might serve on the guiding body. Those assembled would be key in helping to implement the recommendations found in the [Data Summit white paper](#), a document that reached publication in late 2015 and inspired the DMWG to advance the document's goals. At the same time, the passage of AB 1755, [The Open and Transparent Water Data Act](#), resulted in greater urgency and focus for the newly formed Steering Committee. The legislation called for an open data platform to serve a broad variety of water-related data. The Act passed unexpectedly in September and prompted numerous meetings and discussions about its goals. As it turns out, the legislation was inspired by the same source as the DMWG: the Data Summit white paper. Recognizing the congruity of the Act's and Committee's goals, the Steering Committee suggested a role for the DMWG in helping to advance the legislative mandate. In the coming year, the Act is anticipated to make quick progress. The DMWG will do its part to provide information, make suggestions, and help to fulfill the specific requirements of the legislation.

The Year's Accomplishments

The following list of achievements represents some of the activities of note by the DMWG and its associated Steering Committee.

- Received authorization to form a Steering Committee. The intention was to guide the activities of the DMWG by high-level agency executives in fulfillment of the goals stated in the white paper ["Enhancing the Vision for Managing California's Environmental Information."](#) While doing so, the Steering Committee could also identify resources or explicitly authorize requisite staff time to execute tasks.
- Prepared four ["Fact Sheets"](#) and a number of related documents which consist of brief, two-page brochures, designed to provide focused, example-based guidance on a number of technical subjects associated with data sharing. These subjects range from "data management plans" to "open data." In our experience, many of these terms are used imprecisely or confusingly, and yet a clear understanding of them is not so elusive if explained concisely and with the target audience of high-level decision-makers in mind. The DMWG's fact sheets are currently being circulated in the context of discussions hinging on the same concepts.
- Identified appropriate members of the Steering Committee and vetted them through several resources agencies.
- Convened the first meeting of the Steering Committee in September. We established the goals for the body, shared information products prepared in advance for their review, and initiated key discussions among high-level agency executives regarding their own respective data-sharing initiatives. We quickly realized that the Steering Committee is fairly unique as an opportunity for open discussion regarding some significant developments

- In the wake of the passage of AB 1755, we convened the second Steering Committee meeting in December. Developing use cases for open data was a focus of the meeting, and the DMWG was delegated the tasks of helping to advance those use cases, as defined by the Delta Stewardship Council and other partners.
- We heard presentations from various influential speakers, including Abdul Khan's DWR regarding his department's plans for an integrated management system to serve groundwater data, Dori Bellan who reported on the functionality of the SWRCB's GeoTracker GAMA information management system, and USGS environmental scientist Lori Sprague who emphasized for us the critical importance of data standards, now more than ever, as we aggregate from the smallest scale to the largest. These talks will collectively influence how we understand current agency investments, hazards in effecting their modification, and new opportunities for enhancement.

The Year Ahead

In the coming year, the workgroup anticipates participating in the advance of the Open and Transparent Water Data Act, especially playing a role in the definition of data-sharing protocols and helping to ensure that the pursuit of open data results in a net gain, rather than a compromise, for data integrity as more people gain access to data critical to decision making. In particular, the discussions and decisions in the Steering Committee should help to focus and direct the work of the workgroup, as the Steering Committee's roles are more formalized and the relationship between the two bodies better clarified.