

Safe to Swim Workgroup 2012 Progress Report

The purpose of the group is to coordinate the monitoring and assessment of issues affecting swimming safety and also to report that information to decision makers and the public through the [Safe to Swim Portal](#).

The Safe to Swim Workgroup did not hold any meetings in 2012. The last meeting was November 28th 2011.

BeachWatch Database

The new BeachWatch Database has been online since late 2011. BeachWatch is hosted directly at the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP) and has created a more user-friendly and efficient upload platform for coastal county health agencies that are required to perform beach bacterial indicator monitoring. It now incorporates more user requested features to encourage more frequent data entry and will directly upload beach data to USEPA on a more frequent basis than the annual requirement. Since early 2012 this new database has feed data directly into the [California Environmental Data Exchange Network \(CEDEN\)](#). This should allow CEDEN to become the new data source for the [Safe to Swim Portal](#), allowing concurrent display of bacterial indicator monitoring data from both coastal and inland waters.

Workgroup Prioritizations

To ensure that the [Safe to Swim Portal](#) will best serve California, the workgroup decided in 2011 to address two primary questions:

1. What do agency decision makers and the public really want to know about swimming safety on a local, regional and statewide basis?
2. How can we best inform decision making?

To assist the Safe to Swim Workgroup the Data Management Workgroup identified several specific questions which will help address how the primary two questions are answered

- What are the problems in data management?
- What data sets should be a priority for access?
- Where are the data gaps?
- What data restrictions currently exist?

The Safe to Swim Workgroup produced a priority list of information and tasks which will help address public desires. This priority list identified 13 items of interest amongst 3 separate Safe to Swim categories:

- What are the current threats to my beach water quality?
- Is it safe to swim at fresh water beaches?
- What water quality data are available?"

Prioritized Tasks

Near the top of the priority list was the inclusion of bacterial indicators of swimming safety from inland waters. The new data management system, including the new BeachWatch database, its data feed into CEDEN, and having CEDEN feed data to the [Safe to Swim Portal](#) will allow inland bacterial indicator data and inland water swimming safety to be evaluated and displayed in the portal. The workgroup will develop a plan to effectively evaluate and display inland water swimming safety data and assessment information.

Work towards addressing the top public priorities was initiated. Although the priority list gave the Workgroup a good start towards addressing the two priority questions, it was decided that the Workgroup will initiate informational surveys to best determine agency and public resource manager needs, resources and mandates. Progress towards developing survey tools and addressing “what agency decision makers want to know about swimming safety on a local, regional and statewide basis and how to best inform decision making” was initiated in 2012 and a workgroup meeting to review and discuss the survey is needed before sending it to the wider data community.

Safe to Swim Workgroup Participation

There were 15-20 members of the workgroup. Members come from the county health agencies, the State and Regional Water Boards, NGOs, data center experts and USEPA. At the last meeting it was planned to increase the frequency of meetings so that the Workgroup can have greater efficacy in its mission. This was not accomplished in 2012.

For more information contact

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