

EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT
June 13, 2012

ITEM: 9

SUBJECT: Information Item: A Framework for Monitoring and Assessment in the San Diego Region
(Lilian Busse & Bruce Posthumus)

PURPOSE: To describe efforts to improve monitoring and assessment in the San Diego region.

RECOMMENDATION(S): This is an informational item. No action will be taken by the San Diego Water Board.

KEY ISSUES: None.

DISCUSSION: Background
Staff has prepared a draft document entitled “A Framework for Monitoring and Assessment in the San Diego Region” in order to outline improvements needed in monitoring and assessment and the rationale, context, and process for making those improvements (Supporting Document 1.) Additional information about this framework is summarized below and will be provided at today’s meeting. An information item at the September 8, 2010 meeting of the San Diego Water Board described shortcomings of monitoring and assessment in the San Diego Region and outlined staff’s plans for correcting those shortcomings. (Supporting Documents 2 and 3.)

Supporting Document 4 provides an update on progress in coordinating and improving monitoring and assessment of waters in the San Diego Region. It also highlights some recently released products of several exemplary monitoring and assessment programs in which the San Diego Water Board is involved.

Framework for Monitoring and Assessment

The framework document outlines a systematic, question-driven, water body-oriented approach to monitoring and assessment. This approach is intended to produce important basic information that is needed to protect and restore beneficial uses of waters in the San Diego region.

1. Monitoring and assessment programs should always be designed to answer specific questions. With a water body-oriented approach, the first and most basic questions are about conditions in water bodies as they relate to beneficial uses, e.g.,
 - Is water safe to drink?
 - Are fish and shellfish safe to eat?
 - Is water quality safe for swimming?
 - Are ecosystems and habitats healthy?

Monitoring and assessment to answer questions like these can be referred to as “conditions monitoring.” Conditions monitoring needs to be conducted on an ongoing basis to determine whether and how conditions have changed, even in waters where unsatisfactory conditions have not previously been found.

2. If conditions monitoring indicates that there are unsatisfactory conditions, the next question is:
 - What are the primary stressors causing the unsatisfactory conditions?

Monitoring and assessment to answer this question can be referred to as “stressor identification monitoring.”

3. Once the primary stressors have been identified, the next question is:

- What are the major sources of the primary stressors?

Monitoring and assessment to answer this question can be referred to as “source identification monitoring.”

4. Once the major sources have been identified and management actions have been taken to address the primary stressors and major sources, the next question is:

- Are management actions effective?

Monitoring and assessment to answer this question can be referred to as “performance monitoring.” Since part of performance monitoring is essentially the same as conditions monitoring, performance monitoring connects back to conditions monitoring.

The framework document also outlines a collaborative “ten-step process” for implementation of this water body-oriented approach to monitoring and assessment. The ten steps are:

1. Assemble monitoring workgroup (stakeholders);
2. Develop monitoring questions;
3. Inventory current monitoring programs and analyze current data;
4. Design appropriate monitoring program to answer monitoring questions;
5. Identify funding sources and allocate funding for implementation of monitoring program;
6. Implement monitoring program;
7. Compile and manage data from monitoring program;
8. Analyze, synthesize, and interpret monitoring data; check if monitoring questions have been answered;
9. Communicate results of monitoring program;
10. Update and refine monitoring program as appropriate.

The initial steps of this ten-step process are now being taken in two projects to improve monitoring and assessment of waters in the San Diego Region. (See Supporting Document 4, section I.A.) Staff plans to initiate efforts to develop, implement, coordinate, and improve water body-oriented monitoring and assessment programs for other water bodies as resources allow. Staff will provide periodic progress reports to the San Diego Water Board.

LEGAL CONCERNS:

None.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

1. “A Framework for Monitoring and Assessment in the San Diego Region” (*working draft*)
2. Executive Officer Summary Report for agenda item 18 of the September 8, 2010 San Diego Water Board meeting: “Information Item: Assessing the Health of San Diego Region Waters”

3. Attachment 1 for agenda item 18 of the September 8, 2010 San Diego Water Board meeting: “*DRAFT* Vision, Goals, and Guiding Principles for Monitoring and Assessment of San Diego Region Water Bodies”
4. “Water Body-Oriented Monitoring and Assessment Programs, Products, and Progress”

PUBLIC NOTICE:

Notice was provided in the June 13, 2012 agenda notice and posted on the San Diego Water Board’s website.