



SWAMP Monitor Newsletter

September 2009

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Karen Larsen Joins SWAMP



On July 1st Karen Larsen joined the SWAMP team as Assistant Director of the Office of Information Management and Analysis. For the past ten years, Karen worked for the Central Valley Regional Water Board working on Basin

Welcome to the SWAMP Monitor!

It has been a while since the last SWAMP Monitor newsletter was published. A lot has happened since then, so this issue contains several articles about resources, tools, and information brought to you by SWAMP. For more information on any of these topics you can visit the [SWAMP website](#).

Monitoring Council Delivers First *My Water Quality* Internet Portal

Is it Safe to Swim in Our Waters?

This is the first of several water quality themes addressed by a new set of internet portals being developed under the oversight of the [California Water Quality Monitoring Council](#). The new portal brings water quality information together in a single location and in an easy to understand manner for the public, environmental organizations, and water quality professionals. The portal features maps and monitoring data focused on swimming safety questions. Click to view the new [portal](#).



Senate Bill 1070 (Kehoe, 2006) mandated that water quality monitoring, and assessment activities be coordinated among organizations inside and outside California government, and that this information be made available to decision makers and the public via the internet. In November 2007, the California Environmental Protection Agency and the Natural Resources Agency signed a Memorandum of Understanding that established the Monitoring Council. Last December, the Monitoring Council sent its initial recommendations to the agency Secretaries for coordinating water quality monitoring, assessment and reporting efforts throughout the State. The new My Water Quality portal represents the initial implementation of the Monitoring Council's vision, as outlined in those recommendations.

In conjunction with expert stakeholder work groups, the Monitoring Council is bringing together water quality information from a wide variety of organizations with special expertise in swimming safety, coordinated through the Beach Water Quality Workgroup (Southern California) and the Central/Northern California Ocean and Bay Water

Planning, non-point source, and monitoring and assessment projects.

Karen's technical background is in biology and toxicology with particular expertise in toxicity testing tools.

Water Board's Annual Performance Report



SWAMP's statewide assessments of perennial stream health, coastal sediment quality, estuarine wetland health, and contamination in sport fish were presented as the environmental outcome indicators in the Water Board's first annual [Performance Report](#).

How to be SWAMP Comparable

There are many misconceptions about what it means to be SWAMP comparable. SWAMP recently published a [Fact Sheet](#) to help program participants understand the concept of "SWAMP Comparability". The fact sheet provides answers to frequently asked questions, tools to simplify achieving SWAMP comparability, and a consolidated list of online resources.

In the Next Issue

Algae Assessment

Quality Monitoring Group. Local, state and federal agencies and non-governmental organizations have all pitched in to answer your water quality questions.

Within the next few months, additional My Water Quality internet portals will be released to address the following water quality questions:

- Is It Safe to Eat Fish and Shellfish from Our Waters? (initial focus: sport fish)
- Are Our Aquatic Ecosystems Healthy? (initial focus: wetlands)
- Is Our Water Safe to Drink? (initial focus: groundwater)

SWAMP Data Management Products Available

Version 2.5 of the SWAMP database is available. This version provides improved functionality including:

- accommodating bioassessment and tissue data;
- added features for water quality measurements;
- interfacing with online data checkers for laboratories submitting data to SWAMP;
- providing a module for submitting toxicity data using the CETIS software package.

SWAMP Version 2.5 can capture bioassessment and tissue data. The database includes tables for entering bioassessment data such as physical habitat including algal percent cover and taxonomy for benthic, soft algae and diatoms. In addition, forms for entering bioassessment data in the field are available for field crews. Tissue data fields not only include field sampling information and analytical results, but also organism attribute data for fish, bivalves, birds and mammals and laboratory compositing information.

New features common to all data types include expanding the use of groups to categorize data. Geometry tables are designed to store multiple latitudes and longitudes for a station so features such as trawl lines or aerial extent of a sample can be captured. In addition, values in the dropdown menus are common to all water quality, tissue and bioassessment data types, enhancing data comparability.

Online data checkers allow laboratories to check their data for accuracy and completeness prior to submitting data to the SWAMP Data Management Team. The data checkers ensure consistency with the SWAMP data templates, naming conventions, lookup list values, and quality control frequency. Performing these checks prior to data

Standard Operating
Procedure

submission improves SWAMP's data management efficiency.

California Data Exchange
Network

Many toxicity testing laboratories utilize the CETIS software package to store and analyze toxicity data. The SWAMP DMT, working with Tidepool Scientific Software, developed a translation program that converts toxicity data from CETIS to SWAMP format. These applications reduce the time for formatting data to be consistent with SWAMP.

Healthy Streams Initiative

Contact Us

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Click to access additional information, database documentation, and templates for the [SWAMP 2.5 database](#). Downloads are updated periodically, so users should check back occasionally for updates. Additional assistance is available through the [Help Desk](#).

Quick Links

[SWAMP](#)

[Citizen's Monitoring -
Clean Water Team](#)

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New & Improved SWAMP Advisor Makes QAPPs a Snap

Quality assurance project plans (QAPP) document methods of data collection, storage, analysis and verification to ensure that data are of sufficient quality to meet monitoring project objectives. All projects funded by SWAMP or US EPA must have an approved QAPP. That's great, but what needs to be included in a QAPP and how do I prepare one that will be approved?

SWAMP developed the QAPP Advisor to assist project managers in developing their QAPP. Similar to income tax software, the Advisor is a web-based application that guides you through the 24 elements of a QAPP providing explanation and examples of the content needed for each element. The Advisor also will assist users in determining which elements apply to their project and which do not. The Advisor provides common information required for all QAPPs as well as advice and reference materials to help users produce a scientifically defensible and approvable QAPP. Once each element is complete, users can save their work as draft document files that can be edited later. Click to start using the [SWAMP QAPP Advisor](#).

Webinar Series

To increase awareness of tools and resources available through SWAMP, we have initiated a webinar series. Webinars are short trainings delivered through the Internet. Anyone with Internet access can participate and presenters can deliver material to audiences throughout the state without leaving their office. To date, SWAMP has delivered six webinars, which were recorded for future use. Ten more will be available in the coming year. Upcoming webinar topics include:

- Lake Study Findings - October 8
- Bioassessment - October 22
- Biological Objectives - November 12
- Invasive Species Management - December 3

State and Regional Board staff should look for webinar announcements from the Water Board [Training Academy](#). Other participants should contact [Dawit Tadesse](#) at (916) 341-5486 to receive information about future webinars.

Reports Available

Here is a list of significant reports produced by SWAMP since the last newsletter. Click on the title to access the report online.

- [Ecological Condition Assessments of California's Perennial Wadeable Streams](#) (October 2007)
- [Incorporating Bioassessment Using Freshwater Algae into California's Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program](#) (May 2008)
- [SWAMP Quality Assurance Program Plan](#) (September 2008)
- [An Index of Biotic Integrity \(IBI\) for Perennial Streams in California's Central Valley](#) (December 2008)
- [Contaminants in Fish from California Lakes and Reservoirs](#) (March 2009)
- [Recommendations for the Development and Maintenance of a Reference Condition Management Program \(RCMP\) to Support Biological Assessment of California's Wadeable Streams](#) (March 2009)
- [Evaluation of the California State Water Resource Control Board's Bioassessment Program](#) (May 2009)
- [Stormwater Bioassessment Quality Assurance Project Plan](#) (June 2009)

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