

HOW DO YOU TELL THEM, AND WHOM DO YOU TELL?

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The Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP) is a relatively new program at the State Water Resources Control Board and Regional Water Quality Control Boards, initiated in 1999. SWAMP is to provide comprehensive information on the status of beneficial uses in surface waters. The purpose of SWAMP is to provide a statewide framework for coordination of high quality, consistent and scientifically defensible methods and strategies to improve water quality monitoring, assessment and reporting.

SWAMP is framed around beneficial use assessment and regulatory responsibilities. SWAMP's vision is comprehensive measurement of water quality to protect beneficial uses, and to evaluate our protection and restoration efforts. This requires a comprehensive strategy that serves all water quality management needs and addresses all state waters, including all water body types such as streams, rivers, lakes, reservoirs, estuaries, coastal areas, and wetlands. Our vision is to make credible ambient monitoring data and information available to all stakeholders in a timely manner.

These assessments require a clear strategy, effective and representative objectives, a responsive and realistic design, well chosen indicators, useable and comparable data, readily available and accessible data, clear and effective reporting, regular reviews (report card), and a program structure that allows for and assures improvement and adaptability. The current statewide monitoring focus is on key beneficial uses: aquatic life use in streams, and fish consumption in lakes and reservoirs; the regional focus is on watershed level monitoring.

What does that all mean, and who cares? To be truly effective, all these factors have to inform the persons who would make decisions. Those decisions include what waters to protect, how to protect them, how to pay for the protection, and are the actions taken doing what they need to do. Who are our stakeholders, what do they need to know, how would they understand it, and who could provide the answers?

Keywords: water quality monitoring, worthwhile communications, improving stakeholder interactions, knowing our limits