

EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT  
September 24, 2014

- ITEM: 4
- SUBJECT: Information Item: San Diego River Watershed Monitoring Program and Report Cards (*Lilian Busse and Chad Loflen*)
- PURPOSE: To provide the San Diego Water Board members with information about the development and implementation of a watershed monitoring and assessment program developed in accordance with Resolution No. R9-2012-0069, a Resolution in Support of a Regional Monitoring Framework and Practical Vision Chapter 2 (Monitoring and Assessment).
- RECOMMENDATION(S): There is no recommendation at this time because the Board will take no action on this informational item.
- KEY ISSUES:
1. The implementation of the watershed monitoring program will require future Board action. Board actions might include revising existing monitoring and reporting requirements in multiple program areas.
  2. After implementation of the monitoring program, the report cards will show status and trends of water quality and ecosystem health, can guide multiple decision-making processes, and will offer a transparent means of informing the stakeholders about ecosystem health.
- PRACTICAL VISION: This item presents a project outlined in Chapter 2 (Monitoring and Assessment) of the San Diego Water Board Practical Vision and implements the Framework for Monitoring and Assessment endorsed by Resolution No. R9-2012-0069. The development of Watershed Report Cards also advances the vision and mission of Chapter 4 (Proactive Public Outreach and Communication).
- DISCUSSION:
- The San Diego River spans from the Cleveland National Forest to Ocean Beach, a distance of more than 50 miles, and its watershed includes 440 square miles, several municipalities, and a variety of land uses (Supporting Document No. 1).
- The San Diego River Watershed Monitoring and Assessment Program (SDRWMAP) was developed to improve coordination and usefulness of various monitoring and assessment efforts in the San Diego River watershed. (Supporting Document No. 2)

The SDRWMAP is an integrated monitoring program created by a broad stakeholder workgroup of representatives from federal, State, and local agencies, water districts, non-profit organizations, universities, research institutes, and a facilitator. The program design was supported by Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP) funds allocated to the San Diego Water Board and was drafted in accordance with the San Diego Water Board's Framework for Monitoring and Assessment (Supporting Document No. 3).

The purpose of the program is to provide a structure for periodic and comprehensive assessments of watershed conditions, expand monitoring of ambient conditions related to key beneficial uses, and improve coordination and cost-effectiveness of disparate regulatory and non-regulatory monitoring efforts already taking place in the watershed. The program design is based on the four core beneficial use questions: (1) Are aquatic ecosystems healthy? (2) Is water quality safe for swimming? (3) Are fish and shellfish safe to eat? and (4) Is water safe to drink?

In order to communicate results of the monitoring program in a meaningful manner, the workgroup developed a Watershed Report Card approach to evaluate the design of existing monitoring programs and the information they produce. This exercise highlighted data gaps associated with poor spatial and temporal coverage, a lack of effective indicators for some beneficial uses, the absence of appropriate thresholds for evaluating monitoring data, and weak mechanisms for coordinating data and findings across multiple programs. A draft of the Watershed Report Card is provided as Supporting Document No. 4.

Since completion of the technical report in January 2014 describing the design of the San Diego River Monitoring and Assessment Program and draft report cards, the workgroup has made substantial progress on coordinating sampling efforts, collecting data, and creating an institutional infrastructure for the program. The workgroup is currently corresponding with professors at San Diego State University to create a Watershed Science Institute that would establish a formal link between the University's academic and degree programs, and the water resource management and assessment programs in the watershed. In addition, the San Diego River Park Foundation has expressed a willingness to fill the role of program steward, contingent on the availability of funding.

LEGAL CONCERNS:

None

State of California  
Regional Water Quality Control Board  
San Diego Region

SUPPORTING  
DOCUMENTS:

1. Map of the San Diego River watershed
2. San Diego River Watershed Monitoring and Assessment Program
3. A Framework for Monitoring and Assessment in the San Diego Region
4. Draft San Diego River Watershed Report Card

PUBLIC NOTICE:

The agenda notice for today's meeting was posted on the San Diego Water Board's website and sent to those subscribed to the Email list for Board meetings.