SWAMP
Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program

Clean Water Team - California's Citizen Monitoring Program

What is it?

Citizen monitoring is any monitoring activity of water quality, aquatic resources and or aquatic habitat that relies in whole or in part on participation by volunteers and students. Throughout California, citizens are monitoring the condition of streams, rivers, lakes, reservoirs, estuaries, coastal waters, wetlands, and wells. Their efforts are of particular value in providing water quality data and building stewardship of local waters.

The Clean Water Team (CWT) is a SWAMP initiative to support the efforts of citizen monitoring groups in California. Currently there are over 250 active citizen monitoring organizations in the State. The CWT is a vital resource that these monitoring programs can rely upon for support and guidance. The CWT assists groups with citizen monitoring programs through six core functions: outreach and communication, technical assistance/quality assurance, training, loans of equipment, event support and information management.

In 2010 the CWT was able to coordinate with local citizen monitoring groups throughout the State and provide valuable workshops and training events. The CWT also produced new resources to help people locate citizen monitoring groups and to assist in watershed collaborations. The Guidance Compendium for Watershed Monitoring and Assessment (an online technical resource for users) continues to be a vital asset to the monitoring community. A pictorial inventory of the Equipment Loan Library was created and web-posted along with the Loan of Equipment Request Form which provides much needed monitoring equipment to those programs in need of those items. The Citizen Monitoring – Clean Water Team email listserv reaches nearly 1,000 subscribers and its "news for citizen monitors and watershed stewardship" emails have drawn national attention.

The CWT promoted World Water Monitoring Day (WWMD) 2010 and California's WWMD events drew 2,935 people (5th highest in the nation) and 131 sites were visited (6th highest in the

nation). The CWT also supported other snapshot day events throughout California in 2010. Significant milestones for snapshot day events happened during 2010. The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Citizen Watershed Monitoring Network entered its second decade of snapshot day monitoring and the Lake Tahoe and Truckee River Watershed Annual Snapshot Day celebrated its tenth anniversary. The longevity of these monitoring events is producing data sets that yield trend information and identify hot spots, and in some cases snapshot day events are providing the only water quality data available for a waterbody.

Why is it important to the State?

There are many benefits provided by citizen monitoring programs, and the time and effort put into training and organizing citizens to take water quality samples are generally well spent. With appropriate training, citizen monitors are capable of supplying useful, scientifically defensible data to state agencies. A well organized network of local residents can conduct intensive monitoring of a relatively large area in a fraction of the time, and on a more regular basis, that a field crew from a regional water board or other state agency; which is an excellent way to leverage limited resources. An essential benefit is also that citizen monitoring promotes awareness of water quality issues and stewardship of the environment in local communities.

Why is it important to me?

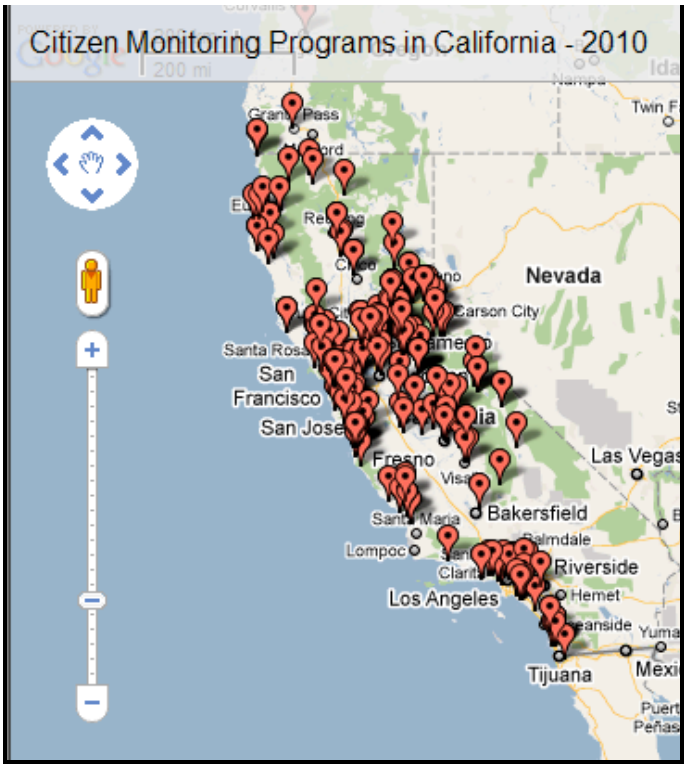
Getting involved with a citizen monitoring group is an excellent opportunity for residents to learn more about the streams, lakes, and other water resources of their own back yard, and to make a valuable contribution towards protecting and improving water quality.

How will the information be used?

Citizen monitoring data is primarily used by local groups to help answer questions or concerns related to water quality in their own watersheds. Citizen monitoring data has also been used to support activities such as:

- Water quality assessments for the Integrated Report (CWA Section 303(d) List / 305(b) Report)
- Compliance monitoring of discharge permits
- Development of tools to measure biological integrity
- Monitoring the safety of swimming holes (Safe to Swim studies)
- Upload of data into the statewide CEDEN database
- Method validation for bacteria testing

For more information about the CWT: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/swamp/cwt_volunteer.shtml



CWT Google Map of Citizen Monitoring Programs