



COMPARABILITY

What is it?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines comparability as “the measure of confidence with which one data set, element, or method can be considered as similar to another”. Comparability is an especially important consideration with SWAMP data, which represents a wide variety of objectives, organizations and procedures over many years, both governmental and non-governmental.

An enormous amount of data is collected to track the condition of aquatic resources throughout the state. SWAMP works to collect, manage and disseminate accurate environmental data of known quality in order to facilitate effective management decisions. Efforts include quality assurance (QA), guidance and data management. These activities are carried out with programmatic support from SWAMP Quality Assurance Team (QAT) and the Data Management Team (DMT). The QAT creates, maintains and implements many components of the SWAMP QA program such as the SWAMP Quality Assurance Program Plan (QAPrP), Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), the SWAMP Help Desk, laboratory audits, as well as webinars and other training activities. The DMT is responsible for managing data from SWAMP funded State and Regional board projects. The DMT manages the SWAMP database and works to ensure that data of known and documented quality are available to managers and stakeholders in a timely manner.

All SWAMP data are stored in the SWAMP Database and made available to the public via the California Environmental Data Exchange Network (CEDEN). CEDEN was developed to simplify and improve access to California’s water resource monitoring data by providing services that integrate, standardize and display data from the state’s many diverse monitoring and data management efforts.

Why is it important?

In the past, funding was invested in projects that generated valuable data and resulted in a tremendous increase in knowledge about ambient water quality. However, it was difficult and not always possible to evaluate or summarize data across projects to answer general management questions on the condition and trends of California's waters.

The guidance and tools provided by SWAMP allow researchers and managers to effectively and efficiently combine data across programs and projects, contributing to better informed management decisions and cost savings.

How will this information be used?

The high quality data that SWAMP and its partners collect and manage provides information that can be used to conduct water quality assessments to help answer questions, such as:

- How well are we managing California's water resources?
- Are we protecting the beneficial uses of our water – namely, is the water safe for me to swim in, is the fish caught in it healthy so that I may eat it, is the overall ecosystem healthy? How well does do our surface waters support aquatic life?
- Are we investing our limited state resources effectively and focusing them on the right water quality problems.

SWAMP comparability resources are available to other state, federal, and local agencies as well as monitoring groups who conduct ambient water quality monitoring in California. The use of these tools helps to ensure comparability of data. They also ensure that the data collected will be of known and documented quality.