Using Web Portals to Present Meaningful Information

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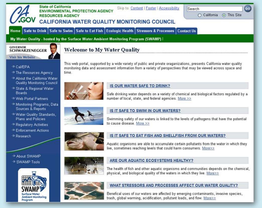
"My Water Quality" Web Portals

Specific themes were chosen for initial action, building on existing efforts that had already made substantial progress.

- Streamlined data access
  - Theme-based web portals
  - Directly address users' questions
  - Single global point of entry
- Developed by Issue-specific workgroups
- Overarching guidance from the California Water Quality Monitoring Council

The California Water Quality Monitoring Council believes that the best way to coordinate and enhance California's monitoring, assessment and reporting efforts is first to provide a platform for intuitive, streamlined access to water quality information that directly addresses users' questions. Issue-specific workgroups, under the overarching guidance of the Monitoring Council,

- *Improve the delivery of water quality information to the user, in the form of theme-based internet portals*
- *Evaluate and enhance existing monitoring, assessment and reporting efforts*



*The Monitoring Council's My Water Quality website, **www.CaWaterQuality.net** provides a single, global access point to a set of theme-based internet portals for water quality monitoring data and assessment information.*

The website is designed around intuitively clear questions that are readily understood by managers, the public, and scientists.

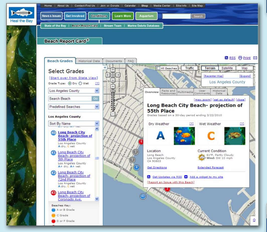
Is it safe to swim?

The Safe-to-Swim portal initially focuses on Coastal Beaches, Bays & Estuaries

- *The **Beach Water Quality Workgroup** coordinates the monitoring efforts of state and local agencies and coastal dischargers, and the assessment efforts of regional environmental interests.*
- *These data and a variety of assessment tools are included in this web portal, released to the public in July 2009*

Each question leads to a series of web portals that provide map-based access to summary assessment products and more detailed monitoring data that address more detailed questions. This opening page of the Safe-to-Swim portal provides interactive map- and question-based access to a variety of information on the safety of recreational water use.

Links along the left-hand side of each page enable users to access technical information specific to the portal's theme.



A link to Heal the Bay's Ocean Beach Report Card website provides users with letter grade scores for each monitored beach, based on bacterial sampling data conducted by city and county health agencies, publicly owned sewage treatment plants, storm water dischargers, and environmental and citizen-monitoring groups.

This page of the compares the same bacterial indicator data for coastal monitoring locations with water quality standards established to protect recreational water use. Clicking on a monitoring station displays the location, the organization conducting sampling, and time series graphs of three bacterial indicators of swimming safety en-total coliform, fecal coliform, and enterococcus. Horizontal lines on the graphs present recreational use standards. Clicking on a data point provides the sampling date and bacterial count.

Is it safe to eat the fish?

The Safe-to-Eat Fish and Shellfish portal initially focuses on sport fish

- *The **Bioaccumulation Oversight Group** is a collaborative effort of a number of state agencies and others to assess the accumulation of pollutants, such as mercury and legacy pesticides, in fish people eat.*
- *A portal based on their work was released in early December 2009.*

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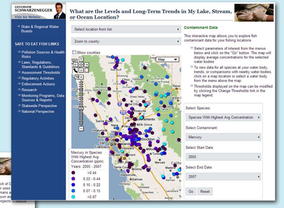
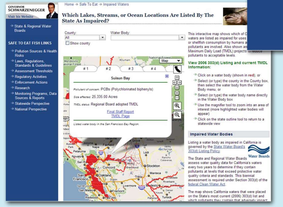
Fish consumption advisories and safe eating guidelines by water body are presented on this page of the Safe-to-Eat Fish and Shellfish portal. Water bodies with consumption advisories are shown in red. Selecting a water body displays contaminant(s) of concern and a link to location-specific safe eating guidelines.

This page compares concentrations of bioaccumulated pollutants in fish from water bodies throughout the state using color coded ranges. Menus allow users to select the species of interest, the contaminant, the time frame of data to display and the assessment thresholds used to differentiate between colors.

Clicking on any monitoring location displays a table of the raw monitoring data.



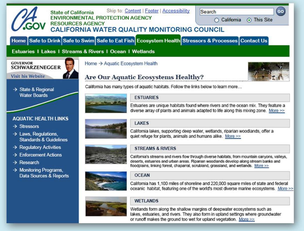


This page shows which water bodies that are listed as impaired for fishing use, based on bioaccumulated pollutants in fish and shellfish samples. Links to Total Maximum Daily Load information for each water body show how each impairment is being addressed.

Are our aquatic ecosystems healthy?

The first Aquatic Ecosystem Health portal focuses on Wetlands

- *The **California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup** coordinates the efforts of 23 state, federal, and local organizations to assess the extent and health of California's wetlands*
- *Their California Wetlands portal was released in March of this year*



Aquatic ecosystem health information is presented in separate portals for each water body type.

Wetlands

This page from the California Wetlands portal provides map-based access to the historic and modern extent of wetland habitats, wetland condition scores using the California Rapid Assessment Method, and the status of wetland restoration projects.

Future Portals

Other workgroups are organizing to develop additional portals on

- *healthy streams,*
- *marine rocky intertidal ecosystems, and*
- *the safety of California's groundwater resources for human consumption.*

www.CaWaterQuality.net

Information on the California Water Quality Monitoring Council and its Theme-based work groups

www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/monitoring_council