



The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) and the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Regional Water Boards), collectively known as the California Water Boards (Water Boards), are dedicated to a single vision: Abundant clean water for human uses and environmental protection to sustain California's future. Under the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) and the state's pioneering Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, the State and Regional Water Boards have regulatory responsibility for protecting the water quality of nearly 1.6 million acres of lakes, 1.3 million acres of bays and estuaries, 211,000 miles of rivers and streams, and about 1,100 miles of exquisite California coastline.

To protect California's water resources, the Water Boards set water quality standards in plans and policies, monitor and assess the state's waters, regulate pollutant sources, enforce compliance with regulatory requirements, provide funding for water quality protection projects, and allocate water by issuing water rights permits and assessing requests to change permit conditions.

The Water Boards released its ninth Web-based [*Performance Report*](#) in February 2018. To improve transparency and accountability, a key priority for the Water Boards, the *Performance Report* is designed to provide information on efforts to protect and allocate the state's waters for beneficial uses. The report describes the performance of the Water Boards in implementing its programs and how the environment is responding to our actions.

What Prompted the State Water Board to Turn to Data

In the late 1990s, the State Water Boards found itself addressing two challenges that forced it to reexamine its operations and ultimately, find ways to use its own data to demonstrate performance.

In 1998 and 1999, a series of studies found that the state water board and regional boards were not adequately enforcing the federal Clean Water act, especially against repeat violators. The reports found that despite a high number of reported violations, fines were not often issued to the repeat violators. In response, the Legislature passed a law requiring serious and repeat offenders to pay a minimum mandatory fine and be forced to prepare a pollution prevention plan. This generated greater interest from Legislators, who sought information about enforcement, but also began asking for data regarding a broader range of the boards' activities.

Because of its board structure, the State Water Board is accustomed to providing information to those who request it, whether from stakeholders or advocates, as part of its mission to provide transparency in how it evaluates water quality issues or water rights issues. Together with the growing number of requests from the Legislature, the board saw value in organizing performance data from its various programs in a public place, where it was easy to access.

Later, the shift from reliance on General Fund allocations to a fee-based revenues underscored the need to use performance data to support the board's fee-setting process.