

AWQA Strategic Planning 2007 – 2012

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Supporting Agencies

MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY, USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE, UC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION, SANTA CRUZ COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT, UPPER SALINAS - LAS TABLAS RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT, SAN MATEO RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT, AGRICULTURE LAND BASED TRAINING ASSOCIATION, MONTEREY COUNTY WATER RESOURCES AGENCY, CENTRAL COAST AGRICULTURAL WATER QUALITY COALITION,

SUMMARY TABLE

<u>Strategic Sections</u>	<u>Action Items</u>	<u>Who</u>
<p>DATA REVIEW, COORDINATION AND DISSEMINATION</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Each year, the AWQA committee will lead a discussion and data review workshop to consider how current water quality information can help with program implementation in the region. 2. The Coalition will disseminate monitoring data and lead implementation efforts with watershed working groups. 3. Compile and evaluate water quality data and program accomplishments relative to the identified goals toward the end of the 5 year plan period. 	<p>Sanctuary, Coalition</p>
<p>AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY NETWORKS</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure implementation resources are connected to watershed working groups 2. Track WWG participation and conservation management practice implementation. 3. Identify priority sites for joint project implementation, based on monitoring data trends, “hot spots” and other factors relevant to watershed working group priorities. 4. Involve researchers in the assessment, prioritization and implementation process. 5. Collaborate with technical service providers to implement projects. 6. Work with local agricultural and rangeland industries/entities to achieve water quality goals. 7. Work closely with rangeland partners to develop common definitions of rangeland health, ways to monitor rangeland health, and practices that work best in promoting rangeland health in watersheds draining into Monterey Bay. 	<p>Coalition</p>

Summary Table

<p>TECHNICAL INFORMATION & OUTREACH</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide training to the private sector through existing professional associations of independent consultants and crop advisors 2. Use NRCS Technical Service Provider (TSP) program and other resources such as grants, involve private sector consultants in the water quality protection program. 3. Provide training to individual growers, staff or/and consultants. 4. Engage the agriculture supply industry, consultants and sales associates with information on the benefits of providing sound input management to farmers and ranchers. 5. Train NRCS, RCD and Coalition field staff on input management and the use of TSPs. 6. Investigate the impacts of conservation management practices on food safety and establish dialogue with health and safety regulators working towards a common-ground solution. 7. Monitor regulatory changes that impact farmers to insure compatibility with water quality practices. 8. Conduct workshops focusing on the maintenance and upkeep of practices including cost. 9. Provide comprehensive training to rangeland managers on planning, monitoring and conservation practices that will improve rangeland health and water quality. 	<p>UCCE, NRCS, RCD, Sanctuary, Coalition</p>
<p>EDUCATION & PUBLIC RELATIONS</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a conference, symposium or discussion forum for current agricultural water quality issues. 2. Develop and pitch media stories to highlight the work of the agriculture industry to address water quality issues. 3. Write articles for inclusion in regularly printed local and state newsletters. 4. Continue to compile all media coverage on website. 5. Participate in existing agricultural events for the general public, such as state fairs, harvest festivals, wine festivals, etc, 	<p>Sanctuary, Coalition</p>

Summary Table

	<p>to promote awareness of agricultural water quality programs.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Acknowledge farmers and ranchers that have implemented conservation practices with highly visible banners and/or signs. 7. Distribute annual reports to agencies highlighting successes. 8. Host informational tours for agencies and the media to better understand agricultural management practices watersheds that drain to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. 	
<p>REGULATORY COORDINATION/STREAMLINING</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustain programs that are currently implemented and investigate simplified methods to extend existing programs. 2. Conduct written evaluation of current permit coordination programs. Evaluation will include use of current programs; process for renewal of expired programs; drawbacks to current program structure and needs assessment for new program areas and practices. 3. Continue to focus on areas that have started programs, but that are not complete or not functioning as well as hoped. 4. Begin development of new areas or practices that would benefit from a permit coordination program. 5. Consider development of training programs for county, city planning, public works, and code enforcement staff on selected practices. 	<p>NRCS, RCD</p>
<p>FUNDING MECHANISMS & INCENTIVES</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct outreach to funding and environmental organizations so AWQA partners are recognized as the most effective way to fund water quality improvement work. 2. Create a digital library of grant final reports from which partners can pull information and increase awareness of grant projects throughout the region. 3. Improve outreach techniques to inform growers of available funding (i.e. advertise similar to rebates available for materials and equipment at farm supply and equipment retailers). 	<p>Sanctuary, NRCS, RCD, Coalition, UCCE</p>

Summary Table

<p>PUBLIC/PRIVATE RURAL LANDS AND ROADS</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide training to public agencies and private landowners on proper construction and maintenance of rural roads, both un-surfaced and surfaced, to reduce erosion and properly dispose of and manage sediment. 2. Promote the use of conservation management practices by boarding facilities and non-commercial livestock owners to reduce sediment, nutrient and pathogen runoff. 3. Encourage responsible waste management by rural landowners, including disposal of pet wastes, household chemicals (e.g. pharmaceuticals, cleaning products, fuels) and regular inspection and maintenance of septic tanks. 4. Promote the use of conservation management practices for rural property management. 5. Initiate dialog with public agencies and public trust land managers on the Central Coast to identify and implement practices that will improve surface water quality emanating from those lands. 6. Compile information discussion in all previous bullet points into a rural land management booklet. The booklet to be developed will be general enough to apply to all counties draining to the Sanctuary, but include an insert with specific contact information of technical assistance resources available in each county. 7. Include success stories about work conducted on non-agricultural rural lands in AWQA annual reports and media events. 	<p>NRCS, RCD, Sanctuary</p>

AWQA Strategic Planning 2007 – 2012

INTRODUCTION

Vision Statement

“Together we will protect and enhance water in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and the adjacent watersheds while sustaining a world class production agriculture region through voluntary collaboration with managers of agricultural and rural lands.”

Background

In January and February 2006 the Agriculture Water Quality Alliance (AWQA) went through a facilitated strategic planning process to help plan for the next five years. AWQA is an alliance of partners with the common goal to reduce sediment, nutrients and pesticides from agricultural and rural lands in watersheds draining to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS). The AWQA committee was formed to assist and evaluate the implementation of the MBNMS’s Agriculture and Rural Lands Plan (Ag and Rural Lands Plan) completed in 1999. There are five partners on the AWQA committee (MBNMS, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Resource Conservation Districts, the Central Coast Agricultural Water Quality Coalition, and University of California Cooperative Extension).

During the past six years, much progress has been made on the implementation of the Ag and Rural Lands Plan; however, the AWQA committee recognized the need to develop well-defined collaborative next steps to help us continue this positive work into the future. The strategic planning process and this document is a continuation of the Ag and Rural Lands Plan.

Strategic Planning Design and Process

The strategic planning was a two-part process, which included individual sessions with each AWQA partner, and a combined session with all AWQA partners together.

Individual Sessions: Individual two-hour planning and brainstorming sessions were facilitated at the end of January 2006 for each of the five AWQA partners. During these sessions each group outlined the role of their organization in water quality protection, issues that needed attention within AWQA, and a vision for future accomplishments.

Combined Session: One month later all five partners were brought together in a combined planning session. For the combined session partners involved with AWQA, but who do not sit on the AWQA committee were invited to participate. There were two partners outside the AWQA committee in attendance, the Agricultural Land-Based training Association (ALBA), and Central Coast Water Quality Preservation, Inc.

The morning session reviewed accomplishments to date, developed a vision statement, and completed an exercise to make sure issues that are relevant and important to the partnership were addressed. The rest of the day was spent reviewing the Ag Plan sections, developing specific statements of intent, strategic ideas and possible actions.

Introduction

This document outlines the results of the strategic planning process, and focuses specifically on the outcomes of the combined session, which was designed to culminate the planning work of all partnership organizations. This document will be used over the next five years to guide AWQA activities. It is understood that this is a “living document” allowing for flexibility and adaptability over time. AWQA will act upon innovative ideas and opportunities to further the goals of the AWQA program.

Strategic Sections

The following is a list of Strategic Sections used to categorize the brainstorming sessions. Participants were separated into focus groups corresponding to the sections below. Each focus group developed a Statement of Intent, which included a measurable goal to be met by 2012 and suggested Action Items for reaching that goal. Although the majority of implementation efforts to date and the following Statements of Intent focus on agriculture, the Strategic Sections also apply to strategies in the Agriculture and Rural Lands Plan for public and private rural lands and roads. The Statements of Intent and Action Items below will be used to help AWQA focus and prioritize efforts as well as solicit funding over the next five years.

- Identification, Prioritization & Directing of Resources
- Agricultural Industry Networks
- Technical Information and Outreach
- Education and Public Relations
- Regulatory Coordination and Streamlining
- Funding Mechanisms & Incentives & Recognition
- Public/Private Rural Lands and Roads

DATA REVIEW, COORDINATION AND DISSEMINATION

By 2012 AWQA will consistently use an effective, adaptive management system that evaluates and reviews available water quality data.

Discussion of Strategy Design:

After the completion of the 1999 Agriculture and Rural Lands Plan, Watershed Working Groups were formed along all the major 303(d) Impaired Waterbodies on the Central Coast. Currently, there is a critical need to provide up-to-date, scientifically defensible monitoring data to Watershed Working Groups and resource agency professionals. The purpose of this strategy is to compile existing monitoring program information and use current water quality data to give the AWQA partners the information necessary for directing resources to critical areas in each county.

Action Items:

- Each year, the AWQA committee will lead a discussion and data review workshop to consider how current water quality information can help with program implementation in the region.
- The Coalition will disseminate monitoring data and lead implementation efforts with watershed working groups.

Strategy Implementation:

This Strategy will be lead by Sanctuary staff with oversight and input from the AWQA committee.

Measurements:

The Sanctuary will prepare a summary of each forum/workshop and the outcomes resulting from the data review.

I. AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY NETWORKS

By 2012 75% of growers/operators/owners will have developed plans and prioritized practices and projects to address local water quality impairment.

Discussion of Strategy Design:

Watershed Working Groups (WWG) have been formed in areas with 303(d) listed watersheds, as well as near waterbodies with no impairment. WWGs provide a forum for landowners and operators to proactively address water quality issues both on an individual and collective scale. The purpose of this strategy is to better connect implementation efforts and resources to WWGs throughout the region. Doing so should help reduce the piecemeal approach to project implementation and result in more effective and measurable watershed scale improvements.

Action Items:

- Ensure implementation resources are connected to watershed working groups
- Track WWG participation and conservation management practice implementation.
- Develop (a) pilot program(s) for prioritized joint assessment and implementation efforts. In the pilot area(s),
 - Identify priority projects based on:
 - Research results, including monitoring data trends and “hot spots”
 - Scientific and technical expertise
 - Grower expertise and priorities
 - Local and regional priorities
- Collaborate with technical service providers and resource agency professionals to implement projects.
- Work with local agricultural and rangeland industries/entities to achieve water quality goals.
- Work closely with rangeland partners to develop common definitions of rangeland health, ways to monitor rangeland health, and practices that work best in promoting rangeland health in watersheds draining into Monterey Bay.

Strategy Implementation:

The Watershed Working Groups will continue to be led by the Coalition with the support of all partners. Along with the Coalition, watershed assessment and project implementation will involve the collaboration of university researchers, resource agency professionals, and technical service providers.

Measurements:

Measurements will include the tracking of grower/rancher participation, farm plan completion, and reports on project planning and implementation among WWGs.

II. TECHNICAL INFORMATION & OUTREACH

By 2012 AWQA will improve integrated input management to optimize the use of the inputs and reduce losses to the environment.

By 2012 AWQA will insure compatibility of technical water quality solutions with farm and ranch management (production practices and goals), marketing, and other regulations.

Discussion of Strategy Design:

To date, much work has been done to reduce the amount of sediment, nutrients, and pesticides transported into rivers and streams. An *integrated* approach to the management of irrigation water, nutrient, and pesticide inputs is needed to maximize benefit and reduce loss of inputs to the environment. To accomplish integrated input management, AWQA will need more training for outreach and technical staff, along with improved distribution of research results to the agricultural industry and private sector consultant community. Growers throughout the region rely on private sector consultants and industry professionals to provide recommendations on irrigation, nutrient and pesticide management. AWQA will increase our interaction with private sector consultants and industry professionals to work toward the *integrated management* of sediment, nutrient, irrigation and pesticides throughout the region.

Action Items:

- Provide training through the associations of independent consultants and crop advisors
- Use technical service provider (TSP) money through NRCS or other resources such as grants, to create greater involvement by the independent consultants with water quality improvements.
- Provide training to individual growers, consultants, and industry professionals.
- Engage the agriculture supply industry, consultants and sales associates with information on the benefits of providing sound input management to farmers and ranchers.
- Train NRCS, RCD and Coalition field staff on input management and the use of TSPs.
- Increase our effectiveness at getting research results out to the agricultural industry.
- Investigate the impacts of conservation management practices on food safety and establish dialogue with health and safety regulators working towards a common-ground solution.
- Monitor regulatory changes that impact farmers to insure compatibility with water quality practices.
- Conduct workshops focusing on the maintenance and upkeep of practices including maintenance costs.
- Provide comprehensive training to rangeland managers on planning, monitoring and conservation practices that will improve rangeland health and water quality.

Strategy Implementation:

All organizations will receive training related to input management so they can adequately assist landowners. NRCS and UCCE will be the lead agencies on improving communication and working more directly with the agriculture supply industry, independent consultants, sales associates and larger grower input management staff. NRCS will also lead a subcommittee to further develop the ideas discussed in this section and move forward with implementation. All partners are working to improve communication with Food Safety regulators and develop a

Technical Information and Outreach

common ground solution. All partners will work to stay on top of new regulation effecting growers and ensuring compatibility with conservation management practices.

Measurements:

Track trainings provided to increase technical assistance and improve staff communication skills with regards to proper input management and use of nutrient budgets. Also track number of private sector consultant and grower contacts (both one-on-one contacts and larger forums or meetings).

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III. EDUCATION & PUBLIC RELATIONS

By 2012 AWQA will be widely recognized as a model water quality program to address agricultural and private/public rural land non-point source pollution on the Central Coast.

Discussion of Strategy Design:

AWQA understands the benefit of state and federal agencies and other organizations recognizing us as a premier water quality program. Increased recognition can lead to more funding opportunities and provide more weight to our input on state agricultural water quality issues. AWQA also understands the majority of the general public in the region has a limited understanding of agriculture and the positive work farmers and ranchers are doing to improve water quality. Increasing the recognition of water quality conservation practices will lead to a greater appreciation for agriculture in the region.

Action Items:

- Develop a conference, symposium or discussion forum for current agricultural water quality issues. AWQA will hold a Monitoring Symposium to convene leading technical researchers and resource agencies to discuss the evaluation and direction of monitoring efforts on the Central Coast and examine the possibility of an annual Ag Water Quality conference
- Develop and pitch media stories to highlight the work of the agriculture industry to address water quality issues.
- Write articles for inclusion in regularly printed local and state newsletters.
- Continue to compile all media coverage on website.
- Participate in existing agricultural events for the general public, such as state fairs, harvest festivals, wine festivals, etc, to promote awareness of agricultural water quality programs.
- Acknowledge farmers and ranchers that have implemented conservation practices with large, highly visible banners and/or signs.
- Distribute annual reports to agencies highlighting successes.
- Host informational tours for agencies and the media to better understand agricultural practices in the region that drains to the MBNMS.

Strategy Implementation:

Sanctuary staff, with input and assistance from all partners, will lead AWQA participation in existing education events for the public where AWQA can distribute information, development of media outreach and development and distribution of annual report. The Coalition, with input and assistance from all partners, will develop publicly visible informational signs and continue development of Monitoring Symposium and AWQA conference.

Measurements:

Track all media stories written relating to AWQA work. Complete outreach signs. Track AWQA participation in educational events. Evaluate success of Monitoring Symposium.

IV. REGULATORY COORDINATION/STREAMLINING

By 2012 AWQA will reduce the barriers to implementing water quality protection practices that stem from regulatory permit requirements.

Discussion of Strategy Design:

Permitting continues to be a burdensome and expensive process that slows and discourages project implementation. Permit coordination programs have been developed and executed with great success in some areas of the Central Coast and AWQA would like to see those successful programs continue. Programs are usually developed for a finite period of time, resulting in the need for updates and renewals to the programs.

Action Items:

- Sustain programs that are currently implemented and investigate simplified methods to extend existing programs.
- Conduct written evaluation of current programs. Evaluation will include use of current programs; process for renewal of expired programs; drawbacks to current program structure and needs assessment for new program areas and practices.
- Continue to focus on areas that have started programs, but that are not complete or not functioning as well as hoped.
- Begin development of new areas or practices that would benefit from a permit coordination program.
- Consider development of training programs for county, city planning, public works, and code enforcement staff on selected practices.

Strategy Implementation:

The RCD and NRCS offices will continue to manage the permit coordination programs in areas where they are already developed. NRCS and RCDs are the lead technical service providers in AWQA and therefore, will also be lead partners on development of permit coordination programs in new areas. The Coalition is vital to assessing the need for development of new programs and the specific projects currently restrained by permit requirements.

Measurements:

AWQA will maintain current permit coordination programs and complete written evaluation of current programs including needs assessment for new programs.

V. FUNDING MECHANISMS & INCENTIVES

By 2012 AWQA will increase the availability and access to funding to implement strategies within the Agriculture and Rural Lands Plan and this Strategic Plan.

Discussion of Strategy Design:

When AWQA partners maintain stable adequate funding, greater technical and financial assistance will be available to agriculture and rural land managers for water quality protection efforts. AWQA can do a better job of securing funds from granting agencies and promoting programs to the agricultural community. By conducting outreach to funding agencies to increase their knowledge, understanding and appreciation for AWQA activities, AWQA partners throughout the region will have an increased potential for receiving grant funds. AWQA is also interested in writing larger grant applications that could fund projects throughout the region.

Action Items:

- Conduct outreach to funding and environmental organizations so AWQA partners are recognized as the most effective way to fund water quality improvement work.
- Create a digital library of grant final reports from which partners can pull information and increase awareness of grant projects throughout the region.
- Improve outreach techniques to inform growers of available funding (i.e. advertise similar to rebates available for materials and equipment at farm supply and equipment retailers).

Strategy Implementation:

The Sanctuary will develop a digital library of grant final reports. All partners will contribute to ideas for better outreach techniques to inform land managers about available funding. The Sanctuary and NRCS together will lead the outreach efforts to granting agencies, improving their knowledge of AWQA partners and activities.

Measurements:

Evaluate regional funding sources including, total amount spent, funded amount and in kind matches. Track number of projects funded, treated area/acres, and number of projects or acreage with projects that were not completed due to a shortage of funds. This measurement will be possible for NRCS and potentially possible for non-federal partners.

VI. PUBLIC/PRIVATE RURAL LANDS AND ROADS

By 2012 AWQA will promote improved management practices on public and private rural lands that are not actively engaged in commercial agriculture in order to improve water quality.

Discussion of Strategy Design:

Public and private rural lands that do not support commercial agricultural and ranching activities can contribute heavily to non-point source water pollution. Section 6 in the Agriculture and Rural Lands Plan mostly focuses on erosion and sedimentation from roadways on rural lands with one strategy dedicated to improved management of public lands. This section has been expanded to include all aspects of rural land management that contribute to water quality pollution.

Action Items:

- Provide training to public agencies and private landowners on proper construction and maintenance of rural roads, both un-surfaced and surfaced, to reduce erosion and properly dispose of and manage sediment.
 - Identify counties with the largest need for public/private roads training program based on GIS analysis and input from collaborative partners in each county.
 - Define specific road construction and maintenance needs per county or watershed
 - Define and develop partnerships with other agencies who are interested in road improvement work for coordination of trainings and funding resources.
- Promote the use of conservation management practices by boarding facilities and non-commercial livestock owners to reduce sediment, nutrient and pathogen runoff.
 - Continue providing targeted workshops in Santa Cruz and San Benito counties and expand program to provide workshops in other areas.
 - Use demonstration sites to educate other landowners on the use of conservation management practices.
 - Encourage the use and development of manure exchange programs.
- Encourage responsible waste management by rural landowners, including disposal of pet wastes, household chemicals (e.g. pharmaceuticals, cleaning products, fuels) and regular inspection and maintenance of septic tanks.
 - Compile information on proper waste management to be included in rural a landowner educational booklet.
- Promote the use of conservation management practices for rural property management.
 - Develop and/or compile educational materials related to drainage; riparian and stream care; invasive species; fuel load reduction and fire safe landscaping; appropriate use of fertilizers and pesticides and integrated pest management.
 - Provide contact information for technical assistance resources available to rural landowners.
 - Encourage use of cost share programs available to property owners.
- Initiate dialog with public agencies and public trust land managers on the Central Coast to identify and implement practices that will improve surface water quality emanating from those lands.
- Compile information discussion in all previous bullet points into a rural land management

booklet. The booklet to be developed will be general enough to apply to all counties draining to the Sanctuary, but include an insert with specific contact information of technical assistance resources available in each county.

- Include success stories about work conducted on non-agricultural rural lands in AWQA annual reports and media events.

Strategy Implementation:

The work currently happening related to this section is lead by the RCDs and NRCS. They will continue to be the lead on this section with support from other partners. The Sanctuary will continue to play a collaborative role for all counties and lead the compilation of materials to be included in a rural land management booklet.

Measurements:

The measurements for this section will vary between counties as a result of the differing stages of development and implementation. The current horse manure program calculates the pounds of manure properly managed on demonstration sites, estimates of sediment load reduction and conducts observational monitoring. There are also follow up surveys conducted to assess the percent of workshop attendees implementing practices. The SCCRCD roads program is estimating sediment load reduction. The programs that have been developed will continue using the current procedures for measuring success. New programs will not be able to immediately conduct rigorous monitoring such as the current programs. Much of this section focuses on outreach and education. For those areas AWQA will track workshops, number of attendees and development of materials.

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