



Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program Bioaccumulation Monitoring Program Realignment Plan

Update

December 2022



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Background

In 2021, the Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program’s (SWAMPs) [Bioaccumulation Monitoring Program](#) (Program) began implementation of a long-term [Program Realignment](#). Through the efforts described in the [Program Realignment Plan](#) as well as the [Statewide Tribal Engagement Plan](#), the Program is actively working to ensure bioaccumulation monitoring continues to be aligned with the public’s needs, particularly in areas where California Native American Tribes (tribes) and communities rely on fishing for consumption, subsistence, sustenance, and/or cultural purposes.

Using the Program Realignment Plan as a guide, the Realignment process will continue to focus on incorporating community perspectives and needs into Program efforts; with the aim of improving the Program’s monitoring and communication efforts and ensuring the resulting data and information are useful and used by the Water Boards, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), the public, subsistence-dependent communities, and tribes.

Successful implementation of the Realignment requires intentional actions that balance maintaining core aspects of the current statewide and regional program efforts, implementing Realignment efforts, and the limited availability of Program and implementation resources (e.g., dedicated PY, staff time, funding). To maintain this balance, the Realignment process will be implemented through a cyclical approach,

where a single Realignment cycle consists of a three-year process focused in a single [Water Board Region](#) (Figure 1).

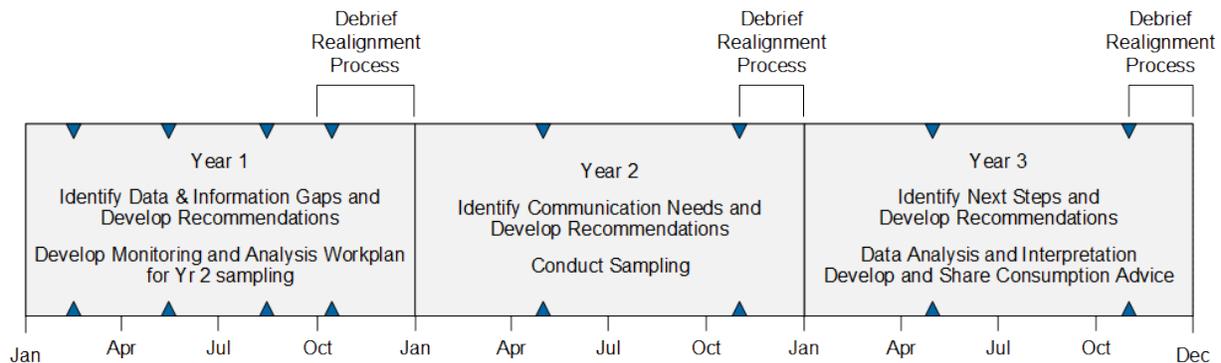


Figure 1. Timeline of a single Realignment Cycle. Advisory Committee meetings are indicated by blue arrows on the top and bottom of the timeline.

The first year of the Realignment cycle is focused on:

- establishing a Regional Advisory Committee composed of representatives from Tribal governments and community-based organizations that represent communities that rely on fishing for consumption, subsistence, sustenance, or cultural purposes; and,
- identifying data and information gaps that inform the development of the Regional Realignment Monitoring and Analysis Workplan.

During the second year:

- monitoring is conducted by the Bioaccumulation Monitoring Program according to the priorities set forth in the Monitoring and Analysis Workplan; and
- the Advisory Committee identifies and prioritizes regional communication and engagement needs.

In the third year, the Advisory Committee:

- reviews the results from monitoring in the previous year;
- discusses what future partnerships might look like outside of the Realignment cycle; and,
- identifies next steps.

Realignment Implementation Update

The San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (San Diego Region) is the first Region to begin a Realignment cycle; they began in 2021 and are on track to complete the process in 2023. San Diego Region’s Advisory Committee meeting notes and other

products (e.g., [Monitoring and Analysis Workplan](#)) can be found on the [Program Realignment webpage](#).

In 2022 the Program initiated their Statewide Tribal Engagement Plan and conducted a series of internal conversations with coordinators from all Water Board Regions (except the San Diego Region). In all these conversations, the primary goal for Program staff was to build relationships and get a better understanding of how the Program can support our Tribal Government, local community, and Water Boards partners. The Program also used these meetings to educate attendees on the Program and Realignment processes as well as discuss the interest and readiness of the tribes, communities, and Regions to participate in future Realignment cycles – the next of which will take place from 2024-2026.

It is important to note that nearly everyone the Program spoke with during these conversations was interested in and supportive of the Realignment vision and process. However, many Regions, tribes, and community organizations are also having to prioritize to balance their own bandwidth and resource limitations.

2024-2026 Realignment Cycle Region Selection

The criteria the Program used to decide which Region would be selected for the next Realignment Cycle included:

1. If there were tribes who were interested in and ready to participate in the next Realignment Cycle.
2. If the Regional staff were interested in and able to partner with the Program to co-lead the next Realignment Cycle. Note that Regional “ability” includes time, capacity, and bandwidth to dedicate to the process as well as Executive and management support to do so.
3. If the Realignment aligns with other Regional Board priorities and activities, such as their interest in and actions towards operationalizing racial equity principles and practices into their work, or adopting and designating [Tribal Beneficial Uses](#) into their Region’s basin plan.

Based on these criteria, the Program has selected the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board (San Francisco Region) for the 2024-2026 Realignment Cycle.

Future Realignment Cycle Timelines

The Program acknowledges that committing to a three-year Realignment process is not a small task. During the Regional and Tribal conversations, attendees discussed the need to plan ahead to adequately incorporate the process into their own strategic

planning and budgets. While it is too soon to decide which region will be selected for the 2026-2028 and other future Realignment Cycles, it is not too soon to start thinking about how those process will potentially intersect with other projects and priorities.

For the Water Boards, two key timelines arose during the 2022 conversations:

- 1) [Integrated Report Cycles](#)
- 2) Water Board Contracting Cycles

Below, the Program has provided a timeline that includes those two cycles as well as the current estimate for the next four Realignment Cycles (Figure 2). Please note that the timelines in Figure 2 represent an estimate of all three of these cycles given our current understanding of their timelines. All timelines are subject to change.

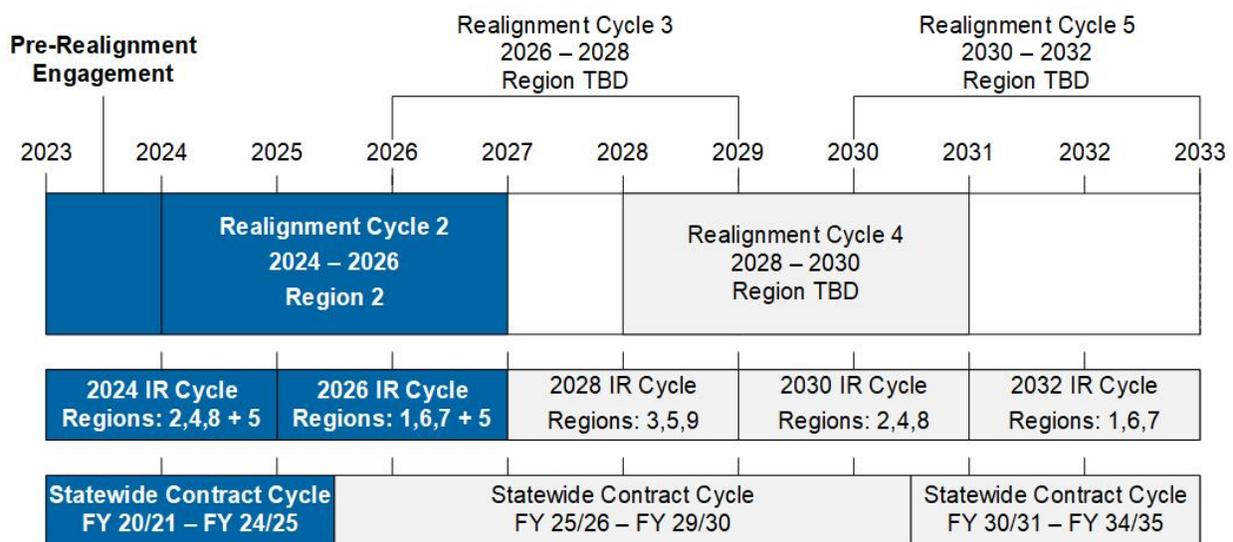


Figure 2. Figure displaying the estimated timelines associated with the Realignment (top row), Integrated Report (IR; middle row), and Statewide Contracting (bottom row) processes. FY indicates Fiscal Year (July 1 – Jun 30). Blue cells with bolded text indicate the cycle has been confirmed, grey or white cells with regular text indicate cycle estimates. All timelines are subject to change.

Next Steps

The Program will be completing the current Realignment Cycle in the San Diego Region in 2023 and will begin the next Realignment Cycle in the San Francisco Region in 2024.

The Program will plan on providing periodic oral and/or written updates on the progress of the Realignment implementation process to the following groups:

- [Safe to Eat Workgroup](#), quarterly, open to the public
- [State Water Board Meeting](#) Informational Item, annual, open to the public

- [California Water Quality Monitoring Council](#), annual, open to the public
- [Water Board Progress Updates on Tribal Beneficial Uses](#), quarterly, online
- [Tribal EPA Region 9 Annual Conference](#), annual, pending approval by conference organizers
- Water Boards Management Committee, annual, internal only
- Water Boards Deputy Management Committee, annual, internal only
- Regional coordinators, annual, internal only
- SWAMP Roundtable, annual, internal only
- Tribal Coordinator Meetings, quarterly, internal only
- Other meetings, upon request – **to request a Realignment update presentation, please contact anna.holder@waterboards.ca.gov**

The Program is also committed to maintaining the Statewide Tribal Engagement activities into the foreseeable future to continue meet with Tribes, build relationships, and find opportunities to better serve and partner with our Tribal government colleagues.

Tribes can schedule a meeting with Bioaccumulation Monitoring Program staff by completing the Program’s brief [Tribal Engagement Interest Form](#) to indicate:

- interest in connecting with us,
- availability to set up a meeting,
- who should be included in the meeting invitation, and
- relevant contact information

Please note that the Program is interested in meeting with all tribes that are interest in bioaccumulation, fish advisory development, and statewide bioaccumulation monitoring and communication efforts. A tribe does not need to be federally recognized to schedule a meeting and there is no deadline to complete the form.

Contact Information

For questions about any topic discussed in this Realignment Update, please reach out to the Bioaccumulation Monitoring Program Coordinator and Program Realignment Lead, Anna Holder at: anna.holder@waterboards.ca.gov or (916) 341-5096.