

# Biological Objectives for California Streams – Regulatory Update

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# Overview

- CEQA Scoping Alternatives
- Water Board Policy Coordination



# CEQA Scoping

- Required for projects of statewide, regional, or area-wide significance
- Held when you know enough...BUT not too much
- CEQA Scoping Information Document
- CEQA Scoping Meeting
  - Present policy alternatives
  - Receive stakeholder input



# CEQA Scoping – Problem Statement

- The State does not have consistent, enforceable tools for:
  - Evaluating attainment of aquatic life uses
  - Identifying and protecting high quality streams



## CEQA Scoping – Proposed Solution

- Develop new or apply existing narrative water quality objectives to protect aquatic life uses
- Establish implementation plan that:
  - Defines how compliance with narrative objectives will be measured – numeric thresholds
  - Provides consistent statewide framework
  - Provides regional flexibility



# CEQA Scoping – Alternative 1

## No project

- Does not solve stated problem.
  - Perpetuates inconsistency
  - Provides no incentive for determining the relative importance of causes of impairment
  - Continues reliance on chemical standards alone



## CEQA Scoping – Alternative 2

### Establish biological objectives for protecting high-quality streams

- Would apply to:
  - Minimally disturbed (i.e., reference) streams
  - Streams that achieve biological condition equivalent to reference
- Would include language for applying Antidegradation Policy
- Would not address impaired streams



## CEQA Scoping – Alternative 3

### Establish biological objectives based on reference condition

- Would apply to all perennial, wadeable streams
- Thresholds for all streams would be based on reference condition
- Unrealistic for many highly altered streams





## CEQA Scoping – Alternative 4

### Establish biological objectives based on “best attainable”

- Would establish “best attainable” thresholds for all streams *a priori*
- Would rely on remotely sensed data for categorizing streams
- Would need to include guidance for considering site-specific information



# Water Board Policy Coordination

- Wetland and Riparian Area Protection Policy
- Sediment Quality Objectives
- Hydromodification
- Toxicity Policy
- Nutrient Numeric Endpoints



# Wetland and Riparian Area Protection Policy

- Phase 1
  - Wetland definition
  - Direction for water quality monitoring, assessment and reporting
  - Regulations for discharge of dredge and fill materials
- Phase 2
  - Wetland water quality objectives
- Phase 3
  - Riparian area water quality objectives



# Sediment Quality Objectives

- Narrative objective to protect benthic communities
- Utilizes multiple lines of evidence to assess protection of aquatic life uses
- Includes process for stressor identification



# Hydromodification

- Policy not currently under development
- Technical work mutually beneficial



# Toxicity Policy

- Establishes numeric toxicity objective
- Establishes statistical approach for assessing toxicity
- Informs stressor identification



# Nutrient Numeric Endpoints

- Ecological response indicators used to evaluate impact to beneficial uses
- Weight of evidence approach with multiple indicators
  - Biological objectives would be one indicator of impact
- Developing tools for linking response indicators to nutrient concentrations



# Questions?





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