

A scenic view of a stream flowing through a forest. The water is clear and blue, surrounded by large, smooth rocks. The background is filled with lush green trees and foliage, creating a serene and natural setting.

Biological Objectives for California Streams

CEQA Scoping Meetings
September 2012

Karen Larsen
CA State Water Board

Agenda for Today

- Introduction & Housekeeping
- Staff presentation
- Questions, discussion, & comments

What is CEQA Scoping?

- California Environmental Quality Act Scoping is:
 - A forum for early public input
 - Required for projects of statewide, regional, or area-wide significance (PRC § 21083)
 - Designed to solicit comments on the scope of the prospective environmental analysis
 - Designed to reveal any significant and potentially significant impacts
- No Action will be taken by the State Water Board

Benefits of Scoping

- Helps identify the range of actions, alternatives, mitigation measures, and significant effects to be analyzed
- Incorporate any pertinent revisions or modifications early

Definitions

- **Significant Impacts** - substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in the environment.
- **Mitigation** - Steps taken to: (1) avoid, reduce or eliminate environmental damage; (2) repair, restore or rehabilitate the environment; or (3) compensate for expected damage.
- **Cumulative Impacts** - two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts

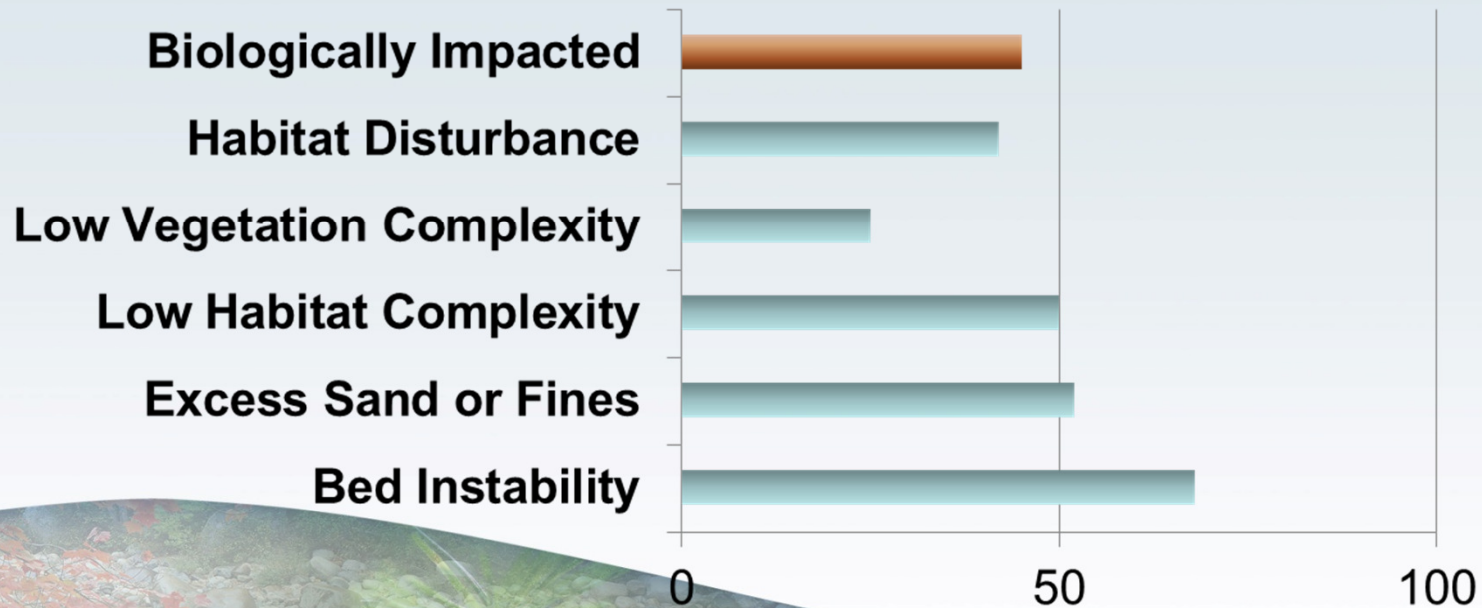
Scoping Questions

- Should the State develop a statewide biological objective?
- Are there additional alternatives staff should consider?
- What, if any, adverse environmental effects result from implementing the proposed alternatives?

Why propose a biological objectives policy?

Streams are degraded

Stressor Extent
Perennial Stream Survey



Why propose a biological objectives policy?

Mechanisms for protecting streams are limited



Why propose a biological objectives policy?



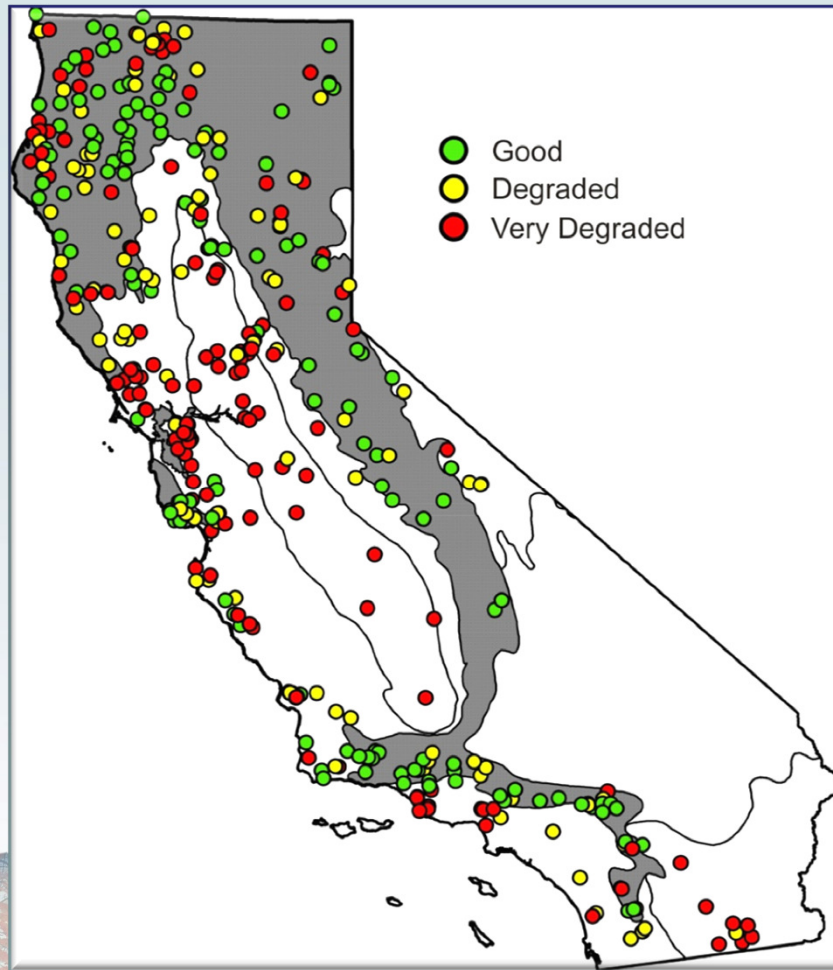
Mechanisms for restoring streams are limited

Why propose a biological objectives policy?



Biological monitoring data are not assessed consistently statewide

Why propose a biological objectives policy?



Regional Water Boards need measurable, enforceable biological thresholds

Policy Goals

- Formally adopt biological assessment methods and thresholds for assessing attainment of aquatic life beneficial uses
- Establish a consistent, statewide framework for interpreting biological data
- Establish policy for identifying and protecting high quality streams
- Set reasonable expectations for modified streams
- Institute policy with statewide consistency AND regional flexibility

Proposed Biological Objectives Policy

Water Quality Standards

Beneficial Uses
Aquatic Life

Water Quality Objectives
Biological Objectives

Anti-degradation

Implementation
305(b), 303(d), Permitting

- State Water Board staff proposes to develop a statewide biological objective for protecting aquatic life uses in perennial, wadeable streams.

Biological Objectives Policy Must Be:

- Scientifically rigorous
- Apply Statewide
- Enforceable

Policy May Include:

- Statewide narrative biological objective
- Numeric translator that defines how compliance with the narrative objective will be measured
- Implementation procedures for:
 - Identifying and protecting high quality streams
 - Setting reasonable expectations for altered streams
 - Monitoring and reporting

Policy Alternatives

September 2012

Biological Objectives for CA Streams

16

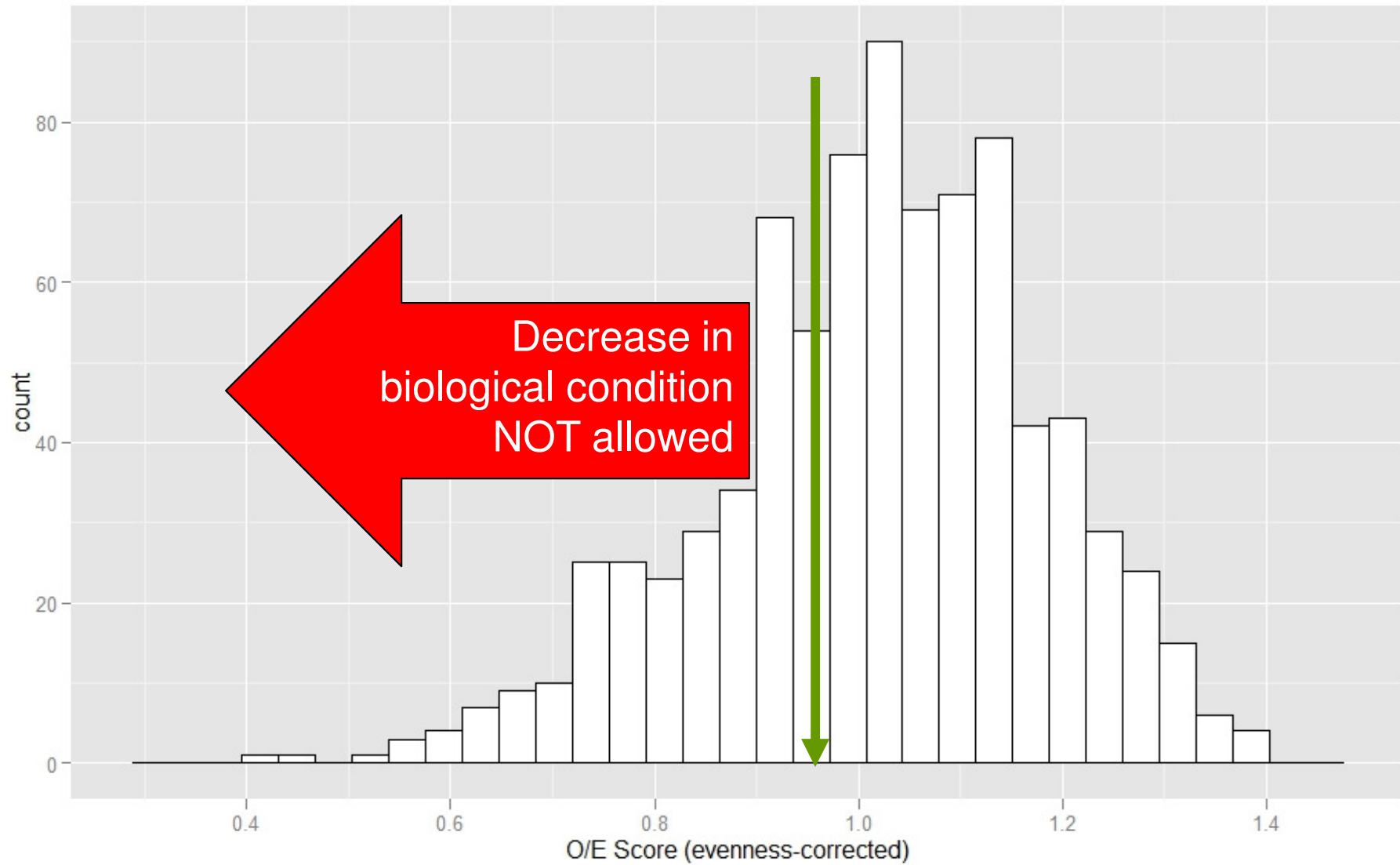
Alternative 1 – No Action

- No new narrative objective would be established
- Existing Regional Water Board Basin Plan objectives for protecting aquatic life uses would remain in place

Alternative 2 – Establish Biological Objectives to Maintain Condition in High Quality Streams & Prevent Further Degradation in Degraded Streams

- The State Water Board could adopt a policy that establishes:
 - Biological objectives designed to identify streams in good biological condition and streams in degraded condition
 - An implementation plan that describes the methods for maintaining existing biological condition in those streams

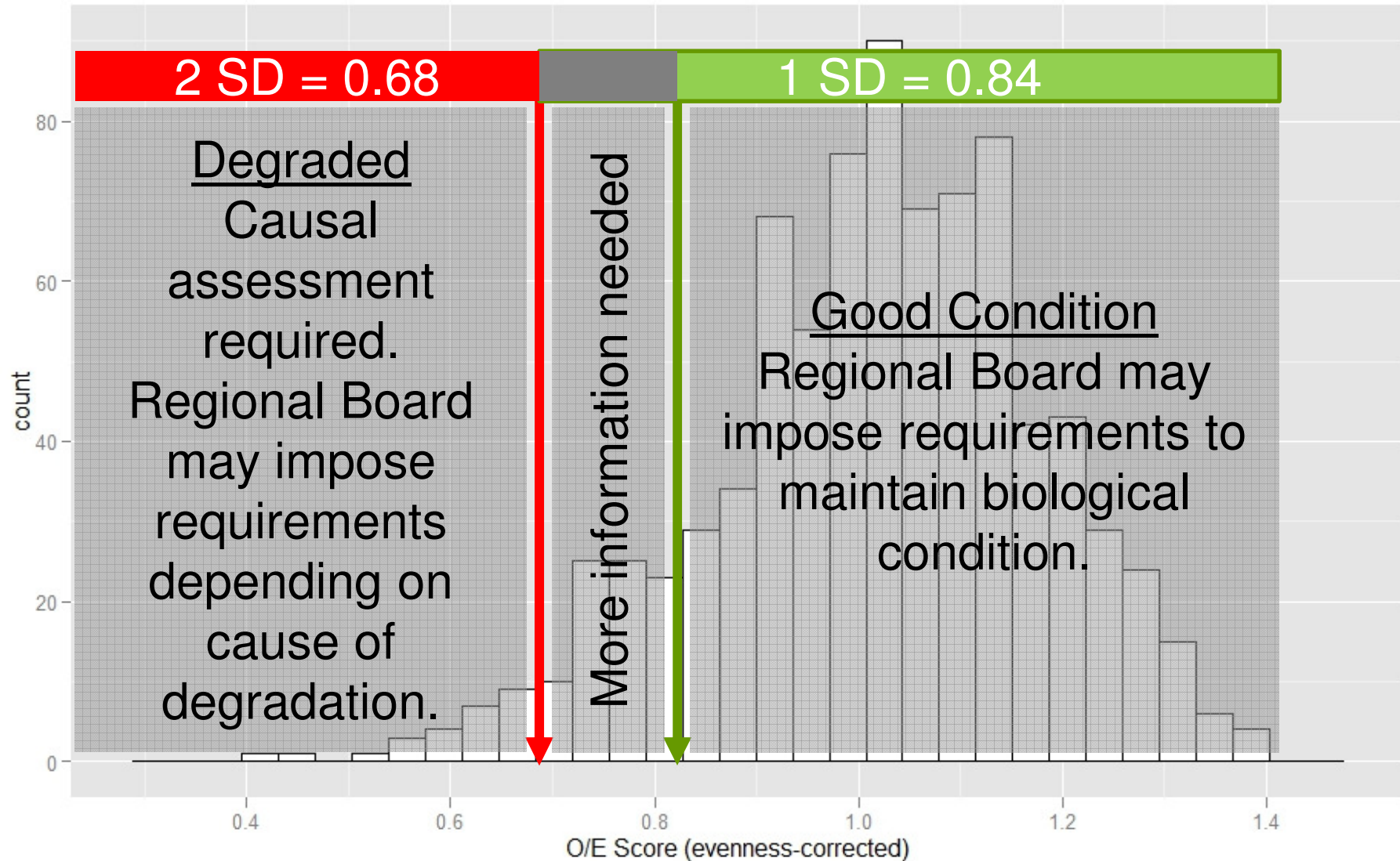
Reference Distribution



Alternative 3 – Adopt Biological Objectives for Protecting and Restoring California Streams

- The State Water Board could adopt a policy that establishes:
 - Biological objectives designed to assess attainment of aquatic life beneficial uses in all perennial streams
 - An implementation plan that:
 - Describes the methods for maintaining biological condition in streams in compliance with the biological objectives
 - Describes the methods for improving biological condition in streams that are not in compliance with biological objectives

Reference Distribution



Additional Regulatory Tools to be Considered

- Apply existing Basin Plan narrative objectives
- New statewide plan
- New statewide policy for water quality control

Scoping Questions

- Should the State develop a statewide biological objective?
- Are there additional alternatives staff should consider?
- What, if any, environmental impacts would result from implementing the proposed alternatives?

Environmental Impacts

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural & forest resources
- Air quality
- Biological resources
- Cultural resources
- Geology & soils
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Hazards and hazardous materials
- Hydrology & water quality
- Land use & planning
- Mineral resources
- Noise
- Population & housing
- Public services
- Recreation
- Transportation & traffic
- Utilities & service systems

Next Steps

- Scoping comments due **Friday, October 19, 2012**
- Work on draft policy & staff report – first half of 2013
- Public draft - second half of 2013
- Public workshops - 1st quarter 2014
- First adoption hearing - summer 2014