



Media Release

Eight Year Study Finds Half of State's Streams in Good Shape – Streams in Urban Areas Show Degradation

Majority of Streams Posing Greatest Risk Closest to Central Valley and Coast

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 30, 2012

CONTACT: George Kostyrko

Phone: (916) 341-5254

Sacramento -- An eight-year study of the health of streams that feed fresh water into California's major rivers and other waterways has found that while 50 percent of streams statewide are in good shape, the remaining 50 percent range from degraded to very degraded.

Streams showing the greatest biological stress (affecting plant life and fish life in waters) through transport of fine sediment (silt), evidence of nitrogen and other fertilizers as well as chloride, were found in low-lying agricultural and urban areas in the Central Valley and along parts of the state's coastline. Despite the challenges, this study is intended to assist in the effort to protect existing waterways that have not been degraded.

Those statistical observations drawn from samples and data taken at 850 locations statewide, can be found in a report just released by the State Water Resources Control Board Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP), entitled "Status of California's Wadeable Perennial Streams (2000-2007)." The full report can be found here:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/swamp/

This report gives state residents a snapshot of the health of streams throughout the state that are large enough to have water flow through most months of the year yet small enough for people to wade into to collect samples.

The purpose of this annual data gathering effort is to:

- Determine the condition of California's streams.
- Determine if stream condition is changing (improving or degrading).
- Gauge by region, the condition of streams.
- Determine how additives such as fertilizers and silt are affecting water life.

Survey Findings:

- 50 percent of California's streams appear to be in good condition. 27 percent are in a degraded condition, and 23 percent are in a very degraded condition.
- All regions of the state have streams in good biological condition except for the Central Valley.
- All areas of the state have streams with degradation, but the percentage of degraded streams is highest in the central valley, foothills of the Sierra Nevada and along the coastal mountain ranges.

C A L I F O R N I A E N V I R O N M E N T A L P R O T E C T I O N A G E N C Y



STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 • 916-341-5254 • Mailing Address: P.O. Box 100, Sacramento, CA 95812-0100 • www.waterboards.ca.gov



- While there were no detectable changes in the biological condition of California streams during the eight-year study, this effort creates a baseline in which to measure changes in the future.
- 100 percent of streams draining agricultural and urban landscapes have a degraded or very degraded biological condition.
- In contrast, approximately 30 percent of streams draining forests and rural mountainous areas with historically less human and domestic animal use indicated a degraded biological condition.

The report makes a number of recommendations on how to use the data to assist other government agencies charged with natural resources and water resources protection, as well as develop regulatory tools intended to improve stream conditions.

#