



US Army Corps of Engineers
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Project-Specific Measurement Quality Objectives

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National Environmental Monitoring Conference
San Antonio, TX
August 11, 2009



Topics

- Introduction – Overview
- Procedures for establishing MQOs
- Project decisions with MQOs
- Case study
- Issues and summary



Introduction

- Data quality plays an important role in decision making but is often not adequately addressed in project planning or for decision making.
- This presentation focuses on developing lab Measurement Quality Objectives (MQOs) for the Data Quality Indicator (DQI) **sensitivity** from project Data Quality Objectives (DQOs).



Overview of DQIs

- **Precision:** Variability; measured by relative percent difference (RPD) of duplicates or standard deviation of Laboratory Control Sample (LCS) recoveries.
- **Bias:** Difference between measured and true values; measured by percent recoveries (%Rs) of spikes or mean percent recovery of LCS.
- **Sensitivity:** Smallest level for reliably reporting analyte concentrations; measured by the Limit of Detection (LOD) and Limit of Quantification (LOQ).



How Are MQOs Commonly Established?

- Copy MQOs from other projects
- Use method performance data
- Use lab performance data
- Follow program or regulatory requirements
- EPA QA-G/4 DQO process ???



Common Reasons for Lacking Project-Specific MQOs

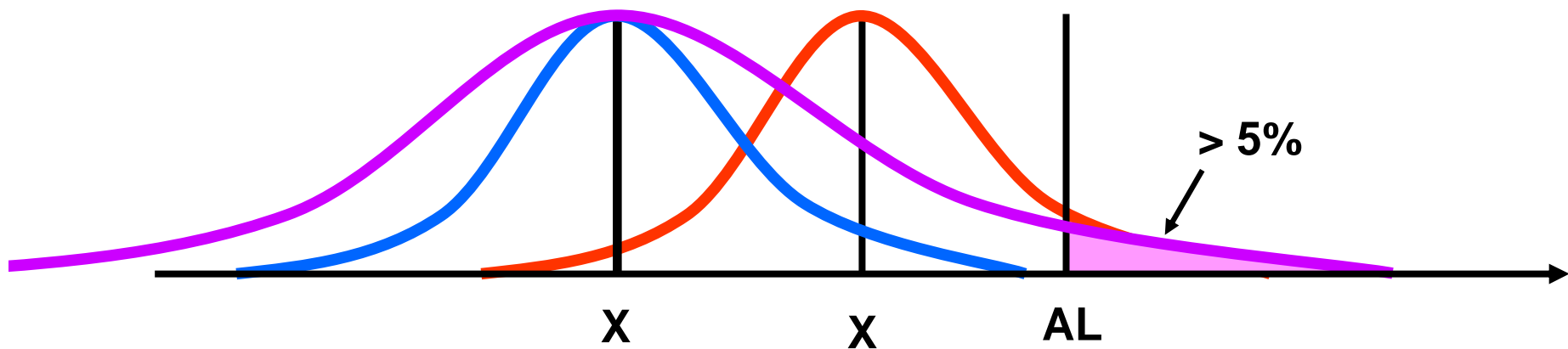
- Don't know how
- Unknown data uncertainty prior to analysis
- Huge field sampling errors
- Limited resources
- No simple, reliable, and cost-effective method
- ???



Data Quality & Decision Error

Is $[X] < AL$?

Is $[X] < AL$ @ 95% confidence?





Inputs for Establishing MQOs

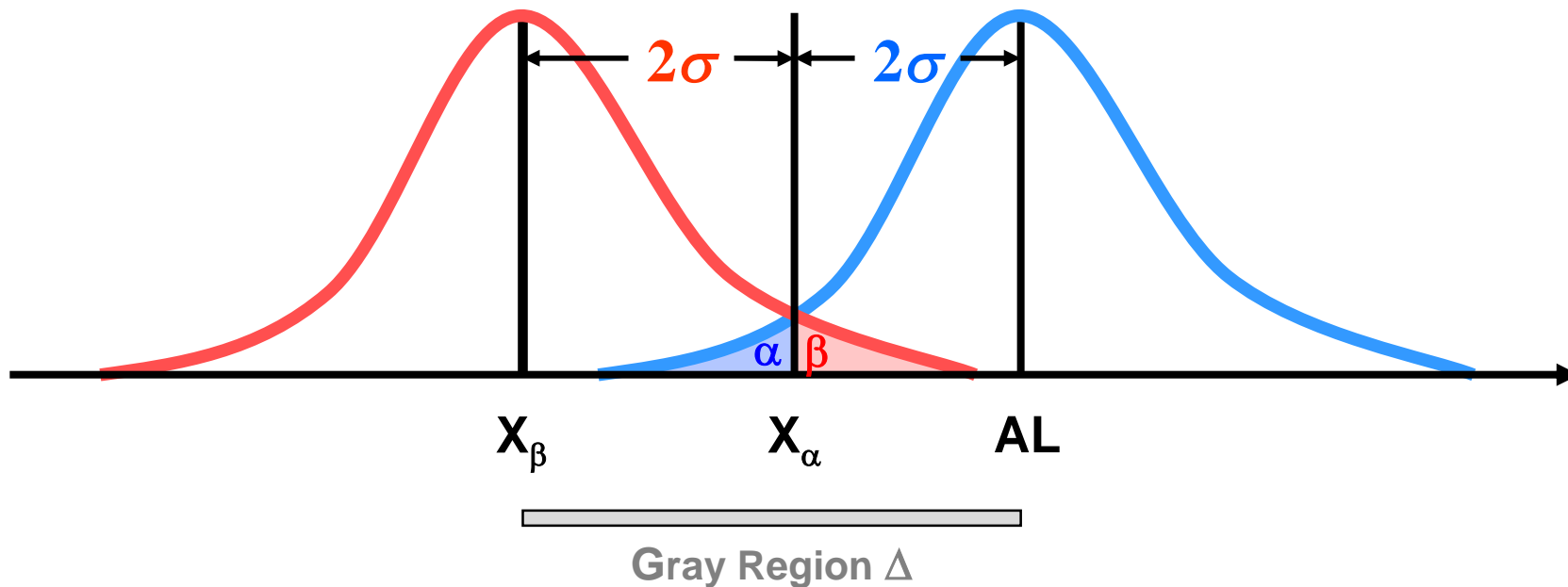
Minimum project-specific MQOs may be established based on:

- Action level (AL): Regulatory level, background, risk-based level, etc.
- Expected data quality: Based on DQOs, method, publication, etc.
- Tolerable decision errors: α , β



Data Quality & Decision Error

$H_0: X > AL$, $H_A: X \leq AL$; decision errors $\alpha = \beta = 0.05$



$X_\beta = AL - \Delta = AL - 4\sigma$, where $\sigma = \text{std. dev.}$

If $X \leq X_\alpha$, site clean; if $X \leq X_\beta$, $\alpha = \beta \leq 0.05$.



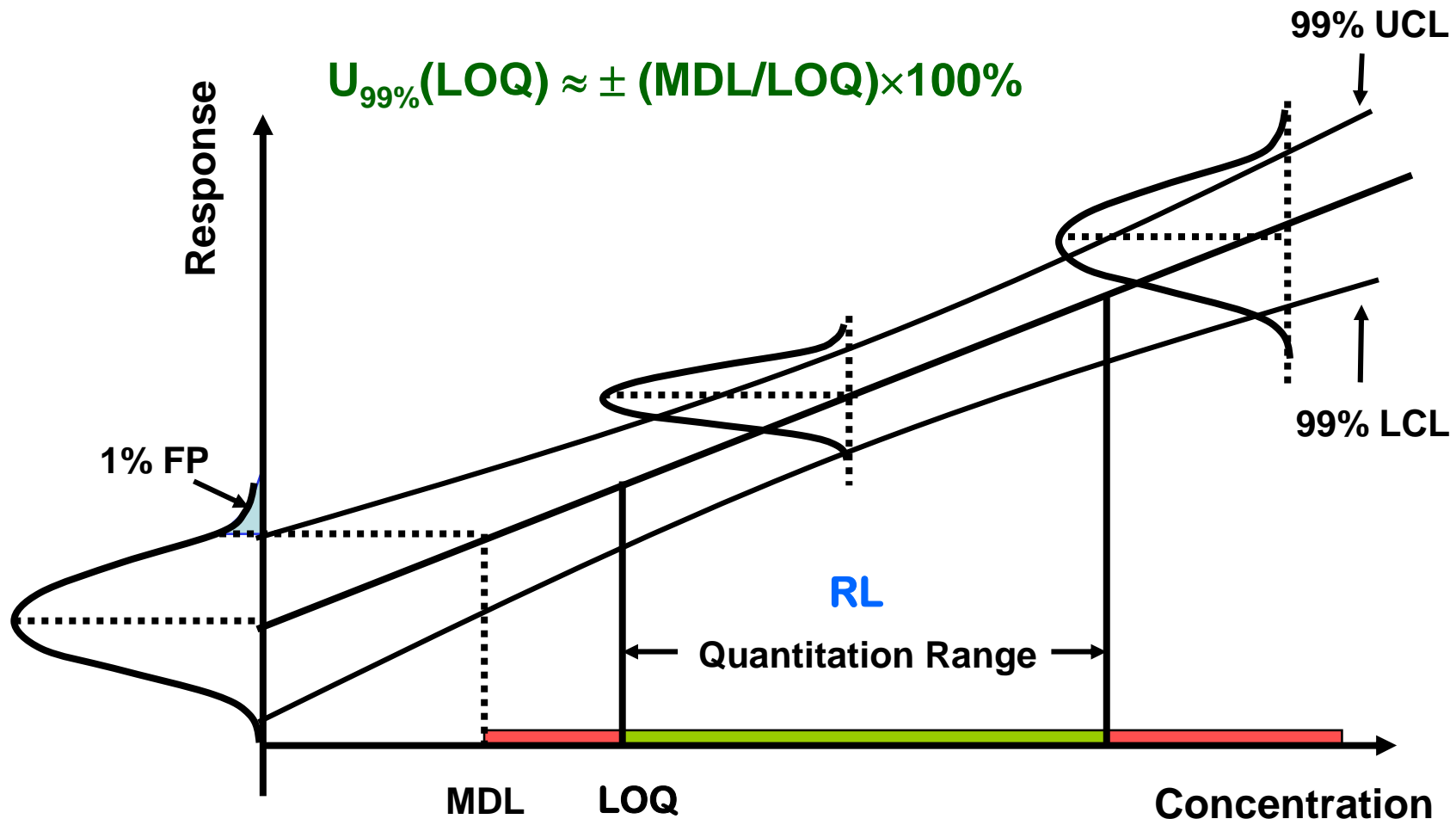
Definition of RL & LOQ

- **RL:** Client-specified lowest concentration that meets project requirements for quantitative data with known precision and bias for a specific analyte in a specific matrix.
– DoD QSM, Ver. 4.1
- **LOQ:** The minimum levels, concentrations, or quantities of a target variable (e.g., target analyte) that can be reported with a specified degree of confidence.
– NELAC Standard, 5 June 2003

LOQ (Clarification): The lowest concentration that produces a quantitative result within specified limits of precision and bias.
– DoD QSM, Ver. 4.1



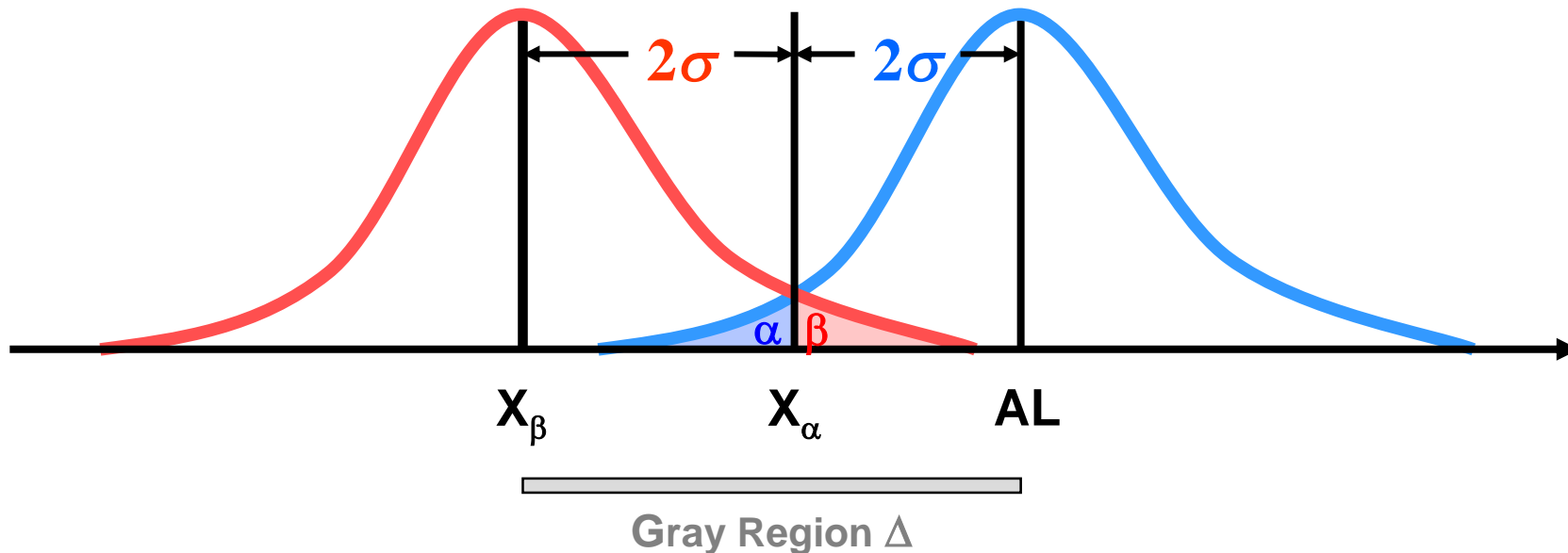
Uncertainty vs Concentration





Project MQOs vs Lab MQIs

$H_0: X > AL$, $H_A: X \leq AL$; decision errors $\alpha = \beta = 0.05$



1. $RL \leq (AL - 4\sigma) \times \%R$ and $\sigma \leq (AL - RL / \%R) / 4 < 25\%$.
2. $LOQ \leq RL$ if both have same precision and bias.



Example for Establishing MQOs

What are the MQOs required for reliable ($\alpha = \beta = 0.05$) disposal of IDW to a landfill if $AL < 50$ ppm?

- **Minimum Project MQOs Needed:**

AL: 50 ppm

Tolerable Decision Errors: $\alpha = \beta = 0.05$

Precision: LCS CL = $\pm 30\%$ $\Rightarrow \sigma = 10\% = 5$ ppm

Bias: mean LCS %R = 100% from publications

Reporting Limit: RL = $(AL - 4\sigma) \times \%R = 30$ ppm

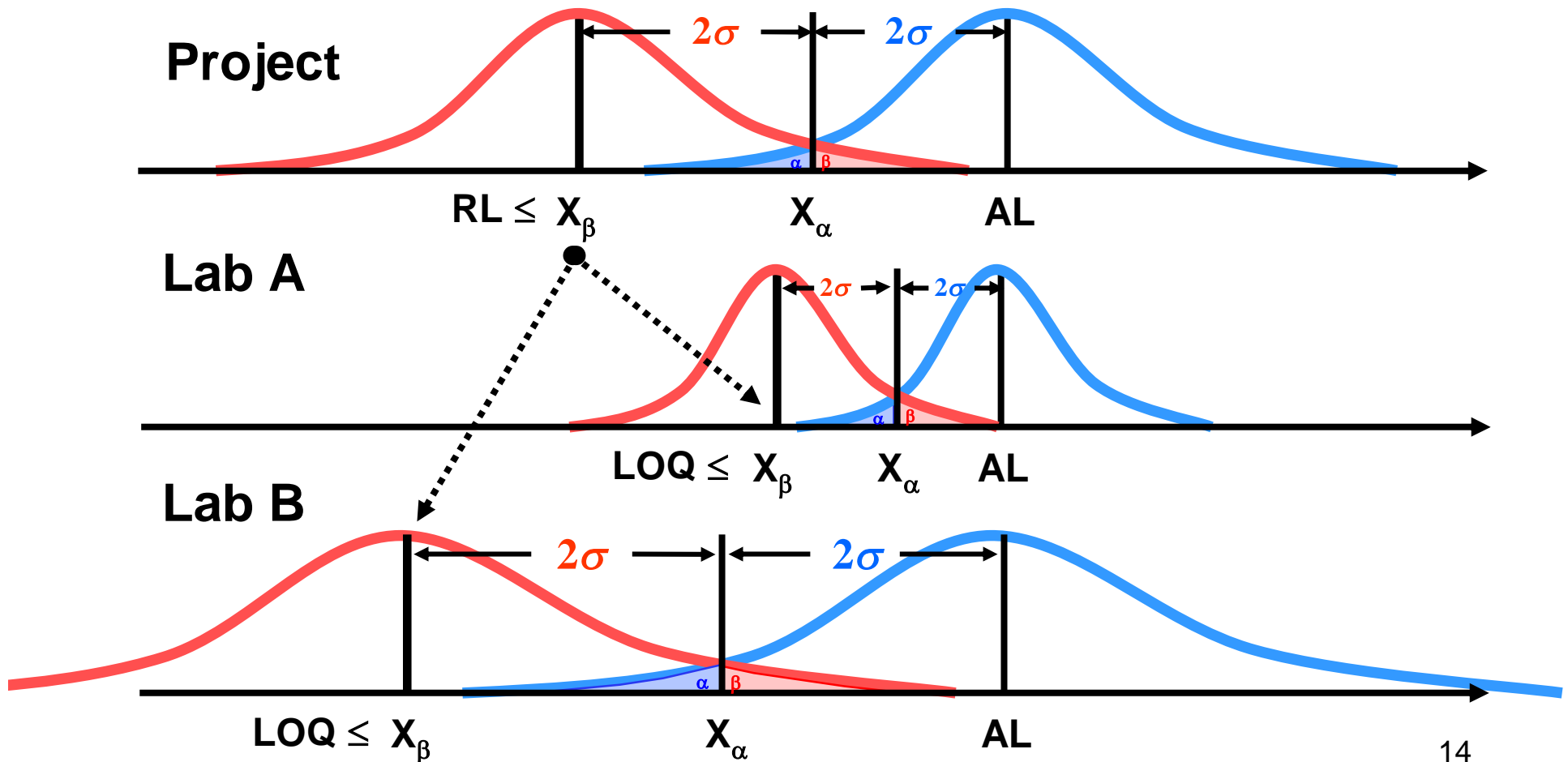
- **Minimum Lab MQIs Needed:**

LOQ ≤ 30 ppm if precision = $\pm 30\%$ and %R = 100%

LOQ ≤ 15 ppm if precision = $\pm 30\%$ but %R = 50%



Project RL vs Lab LOQ








Issues

- Old Rules of Thumb of “LOQ = Lowest Cal. Std. = $3 \times \text{MDL}$
 $\leq \text{RL} \leq 1/5 \sim 1/10 \times \text{AL}$ ” may not be adequate.
- Lab with $\text{LOQ} \leq \text{RL}$ does not necessarily meet project MQO for sensitivity. Precision & bias must also be considered.
- Scientifically valid and consistent procedures are needed for establishing lab performance data for precision, bias and sensitivity.
- Total data quality, including field sampling and lab analysis, needs to be considered for reliable project planning and decision making. Better sampling design and techniques will significantly reduce field sampling errors.



Case Study

- Groundwater investigation of a potential source of benzo(a)pyrene contamination. Developing MQOs for precision, bias, and sensitivity & screening contract labs.
 - AL: MCL = 0.2 ppb; Expected data quality: LCS %R = 81.3% & $\sigma = 9.5%$ from DoD QSM; Decision errors: $\alpha = \beta = 0.05$
 - $RL \leq (AL - 4\sigma) \times \%R = 0.10$ ppb if %R $\geq 81\%$ & $\sigma \leq 9.5\%$
- Lab X:
 - SW 8270: LOQ = 0.2 ppb; LCS %R = 82.5% & $\sigma = 16.2\%$ 
 - $LOQ \leq (AL - 4\sigma) \times \%R = (0.2 - 4 \times 16.2\% \times 0.2) \times 82.5\% = 0.058$ ppb
- Lab Y:
 - SW 8270: LOQ = 0.2 ppb; LCS %R = 84.5% & $\sigma = 9.8\%$ 
 - SW 8310: LOQ = 0.1 ppb; LCS %R = 92.5% & $\sigma = 9.5\%$  16



Summary

- Simple, reliable, and cost-effective procedure for establishing MQOs based on project-specific action level, expected lab data quality, and tolerable decision errors.
- MQOs established based on lab LCS control limits are minimum data quality requirements. More stringent MQOs are needed to cover field sampling errors and sample matrix interferences.
- A useful tool for screening contract labs prior to contract award. $LOQ \leq RL$ may not meet DQOs.



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