

New Safe Eating Advisory for Fish in California Coastal Waters

by Jay Davis, San Francisco Estuary Institute/Aquatic Science Center (jay@sfei.org)

The CalEPA Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment is the primary State entity for the evaluation of risks posed by chemical contaminants in the environment. Its mission is to protect and enhance public health and the environment through the scientific evaluation of the risks posed by hazardous substances. OEHHA works in close partnership with SWAMP when designing statewide fish contamination studies so that the resulting data can be used to develop safe fish consumption advisories for the public.

The new coastal fish advisory (see poster on next page) marks the first time the State has provided safe eating guidelines for three dozen species of fish across hundreds of miles of the California coast, stretching from the Oregon border to Mexico. The advisory focuses on levels of mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and covers many commonly consumed species, including sanddabs, croaker, surfperch, and rockfish. Combined with more than 70 existing advisories that cover hundreds of lakes, rivers, bays, and reservoirs, the State now provides health-based guidance for the great majority of places where people catch and eat fish in California. Much of the data used to develop these advisories were generated by SWAMP's bioaccumulation monitoring program.

The coastal advisory states that small flatfish species, such as Spotted Turbot and Speckled Sanddab, can be safely eaten as many as six times a week by all population groups, while consumption of other fish species listed in the advisory should be limited to four times a week or less. Women ages 18-45 and children ages 1-17 should refrain from eating shark and four rockfish species that are high in mercury. Seven other species of rockfish have moderate levels of mercury and can be safely eaten once per week by women 18-45 and children 1-17. Women 46 and older, and men 18 and older can eat as many as four servings of these species per week.

This advisory applies only to recreational fishing in the coastal waters of California, excluding enclosed bays (such as Morro Bay) and the area from Ventura Harbor to San Mateo Point (near San Clemente), which have their own advisories. State coastal waters are defined as extending three nautical miles from the mean low tide line, and three nautical miles beyond the outermost islands (for example, the Channel or Farallon islands), including all waters between those islands and the coast, from the Oregon/California border to the United States/Mexico border.

OEHHA also offers an advisory for Chinook salmon, striped bass, and other species that migrate between different waterbodies and a statewide advisory for lakes and reservoirs that do not have site-specific advisories.

SWAMP is planning to conduct repeated surveys of coastal fish on a 10-year cycle in order to address information gaps and track trends. A second survey is planned, with a multi-year effort, for 2018.

The coastal advisory, as well as safe eating guidelines for other fish species found in California waterbodies, are available [here](#).

(View advisory poster on next page)



A Guide to Eating Fish from the California Coast

Advisory for Areas Without Site-specific Advice

Women 18 - 45 years and Children 1 - 17 years

 Croaker  Low-PCB Surfperch  Queenfish  Very Low-PCB Surfperch  Topsmelt  Small Flatfish	 Barred Sand Bass  California Corbina  Cabezon  Lingcod  Medium-Mercury Rockfish  Kelp Bass	 High-Mercury Rockfish  Sharks
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6 total servings a week **OR** 1 total serving a week **Do not eat**

Women 46 years and older and Men 18 years and older

 Croaker  Queenfish  Medium-Mercury Rockfish  Small Flatfish  Topsmelt  Very Low-PCB Surfperch	 Low-PCB Surfperch  Cabezon  Barred Sand Bass  Kelp Bass  Lingcod	 California Corbina  High-Mercury Rockfish  Sharks
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6 total servings a week **OR** 2 total servings a week **OR** 1 total serving a week

Croaker species include: White and Yellowfin
Small Flatfish species include: Diamond Turbot, Longfin Sanddab, Speckled Sanddab, Spotted Turbot
Medium-Mercury Rockfish species include: Black, Blue, Brown, Kelp, Olive, Rosethorn, and Vermillion
High-Mercury Rockfish species include: Black and Yellow, China, Copper and Gopher
Very Low-PCB Surfperch species include: Barred, Black, Pile, Rainbow, Spotfin, and White
Low-PCB Surfperch species include: Shiner, Silver, and Walleye

What is a serving?



For Adults For Children

A serving is about the size and thickness of your hand for fish fillets. Give children smaller servings.

Why eat fish?

Eating fish is good for your health. Fish have omega-3s that can reduce your risk for heart disease and improve how the brain develops in unborn babies and children.

What is the concern?

Some fish have high levels of mercury and PCBs. Mercury can harm the brain, especially in unborn babies and children. PCBs can cause cancer.

Do not combine advice. If you eat 2 servings of fish from the "2 total servings per week group", do not eat any other fish that week from any source (caught or store bought).

