

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment



Matthew Rodriguez
Secretary for
Environmental Protection

George V. Alexeeff, Ph.D., D.A.B.T., Director
Headquarters • 1001 I Street • Sacramento, California 95814
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 4010 • Sacramento, California 95812-4010
Oakland Office • Mailing Address: 1515 Clay Street, 16th Floor • Oakland, California 94612



Edmund G. Brown Jr.
Governor

OEHHA Issues New Statewide Advisory & Eating Guidelines For Fish From Hundreds of California Lakes and Reservoirs

Rainbow trout, smaller brown trout have best health benefits, lowest mercury

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CONTACT: SAM DELSON (916) 324-0955 (office)
(916) 764-0955 (mobile)

SACRAMENTO – A new statewide sport fish advisory recommends that women aged 18-45 and children under 18 should choose wild-caught rainbow trout and smaller brown trout over bass, carp, and larger brown trout caught in California's lakes and reservoirs.

These trout have lower methylmercury levels and higher levels of healthy omega-3 fatty acids, according to the advisory and safe eating guidelines for sport fish released today by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA). The advisory covers fish from lakes and reservoirs that do not have their own specific individual advisories.

"Methylmercury builds up in the bodies of fish, and can build up in the bodies of people who eat those fish," said OEHHA Director Dr. George Alexeeff. "We hope these guidelines will help California sport fishers choose healthier fish species while avoiding species with high levels of mercury."

The statewide advisory recommends that women 18-45 and children should avoid eating any bass, carp or large brown trout, while women over 45 and men should eat no more than one serving per week of these fish species. By contrast, women 18-45 and children can eat two servings per week of rainbow trout, while men and older women can eat up to six servings per week.

It recommends that women 18-45 and children can eat one serving per week of bullhead, catfish, bluegill or small brown trout (16 inches or shorter). Women older than 45 and men can eat up to two servings per week of these fish species.

Mercury in the environment comes from past mining and coal-burning activities. Methylmercury can harm the brain and nervous systems of people, especially unborn babies and children.

California Environmental Protection Agency

Sacramento: (916) 324-7572 Oakland: (510) 622-3200

www.oehha.ca.gov

In creating the advisory and guidelines, OEHHA scientists evaluated data from 272 lakes and reservoirs and considered data from more than 2600 individual fish samples. The data come from the State Water Resources Control Board's Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program, the Toxic Substances Monitoring Program, and the Fish Mercury Project.

More sampling and testing of fish tissue for chemicals is needed to develop statewide advice for additional fish species and advice at individual water bodies. OEHHA will continue to develop site-specific advisories as data become available. OEHHA plans further coordination with the state water board to obtain more data.

A fact sheet and the Fish Advisory and Safe Eating Guidelines – as well as advisories and safe eating guidelines for other fish and specific bodies of water – may be viewed at <http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish.html>.