

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment



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New Fish Advisory For Vasona Lake and Camden Ponds: Trout Safe to Eat Daily, But Avoid Carp and Goldfish

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SACRAMENTO – A new state fish advisory for Santa Clara County’s Vasona Lake and Camden Ponds recommends that anglers avoid eating carp and goldfish, but they can safely eat rainbow trout every day.

Children and women of childbearing age should not eat any carp or goldfish from the lake and ponds, while women over 45 and men 18 and older can eat one serving per week of these species. All anglers can safely eat up to seven servings per week of rainbow trout from the lake and ponds.

The recommendations for carp, goldfish, rainbow trout and three other fish species are based on levels of methylmercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). The advisory and eating guidelines were developed by the California Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA).

“Eating fish provides important health benefits,” said OEHHA Director Dr. George Alexeeff. “Fish are an excellent source of protein and can help reduce the risk of heart disease. These guidelines are designed to help anglers and their families balance these health benefits against the risks from exposure to contaminants.”

Contamination from mercury and PCBs builds up in fish tissues, but not in water from the lake and ponds. Drinking water from the Santa Clara Valley Water District consistently meets or exceeds water quality standards.

Methylmercury can harm the brain and nervous system of people, especially in fetuses and children as they grow. PCBs can affect the nervous system, and can cause cancer and other health effects.

For anglers who prefer to eat fish species other than rainbow trout, children and women of childbearing age should limit consumption of bass and catfish to one serving a week, or can instead eat two servings of bluegill or other sunfish. Women over 45 and men can eat six servings a week of bluegill or other sunfish. Alternatively, they can choose two servings a week of catfish or three servings of bass.

Eating fish in amounts slightly greater than the advisory's recommendations is not likely to cause a health problem if it is done only occasionally, such as eating fish caught during an annual vacation.

The health advisory and guidelines for Vasona Lake and Camden Ponds – as well as advisories and eating guidelines for other fish species and California bodies of water – are available at http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish/so_cal/index.html. A graphic with pictures of the six fish species and the consumption advice is available in both English and Spanish.

Vasona Lake and Camden Ponds are part of the 150-acre Vasona Lake County Park in Los Gatos. The largest pond is stocked with rainbow trout. Prior to annual Kids Fishing Days, officials also stock the lake and another pond with rainbow trout and catfish.

The advisory is based on data from the State Water Resources Control Board's Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program and the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board.

OEHHA is the primary state entity for the assessment of risks posed by chemical contaminants in the environment. Its mission is to protect and enhance public health and the environment by scientific evaluation of risks posed by hazardous substances.

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