



## Press Release

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## **New Statewide Advisory Provides First Safe Eating Advice for Fish from Coastal Waters Between Oregon and Mexico**

SACRAMENTO – [A new fish advisory](#) issued today marks the first time the State has provided safe eating advice for three dozen species of fish across hundreds of miles of the California coast from the Oregon border to Mexico.

The new advisory 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 advice for the great majority of places where people catch and eat fish in California.

“This coastal advisory is a major milestone in our work to provide Californians with essential information to help them make informed choices about which fish to catch and safely eat,” said Dr. Lauren Zeise, acting director of the California Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA). “For the first time, this advisory provides safe eating information for dozens of species from California’s northernmost coastal waters to the international border with Mexico.”

The recommendations are based on levels of mercury and PCBs, which are the main contaminants of concern for people eating fish from California coastal waters. “Eating fish low in chemical contaminants can help reduce the risk of heart disease and provides an excellent source of protein,” Dr. Zeise stated. “These guidelines are designed to balance the health benefits of eating fish against the risks from exposure to mercury and PCBs.”

The advisory applies only to recreational fishing and does not cover commercially caught fish sold in markets.

The coastal advisory recommends that small flatfish species, such as Spotted Turbot and Speckled Sanddab, can be eaten as many as six times a week by all population groups, while consumption of other species of fish listed in the advisory should be limited to one to four times a week.

Women ages 18-45 and children ages 1-17 should not eat shark and four rockfish species that are high in mercury – Black and Yellow, China, Copper, and Gopher Rockfish. Seven other species of Rockfish have medium levels of mercury. They can be

safely eaten once per week by women 18-45 and children 1-17 or as many as four servings per week for women 46 and older and men 18 and older.

The advice applies to coastal waters of California, excluding enclosed bays and the area from Ventura Harbor to San Mateo Point (near San Clemente), which has its own advisory. There are also existing advisories for San Francisco, San Diego, Mission, and Tomales bays, and Elkhorn Slough.

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

Coastal state 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.

Mercury is a naturally occurring metal that is released into the environment from mining and burning coal. It accumulates in fish in the form of methylmercury, which can damage the brain and nervous system, especially in developing children and fetuses.

PCBs are industrial chemicals that were used in electrical equipment. PCB manufacturing in the United States stopped in the late 1970s, but they can still be found in the environment from spills, leaks or improper disposal. PCBs can build up in the body. They can affect the nervous system and can cause cancer and other health effects.

The coastal advisory – as well as eating guidelines for other fish species found in California bodies of water – are available at: <http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish/advisories>.

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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