



Health Advisory and Guidelines for Eating Fish from Lake Casitas (Ventura County)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ATL	Advisory Tissue Level
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CEDEN	California Environmental Data Exchange Network
DDT(s)	dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) and its metabolites dichlorodiphenyldichloroethane (DDD) and dichlorodiphenyldichloroethylene (DDE)
DMA	direct mercury analyzer
FDA	United States Food and Drug Administration
Hg	mercury
ICP-MS	inductively coupled plasma-mass spectrometry
LARWQCB	Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
MDL	method detection limit
mm	millimeters
MPSL	Marine Pollution Studies Laboratory at Moss Landing Marine Laboratories
OEHHA	Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment
PBDEs	polybrominated diphenyl ethers
PCBs	polychlorinated biphenyls
ppb	parts per billion
RL	reporting limit
Se	selenium
SWAMP	Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program
SWRCB	State Water Resources Control Board
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USDHHS	United States Department of Health and Human Services
US EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency

PREFACE

The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), a department in the California Environmental Protection Agency, is responsible for evaluating potential public health risks from chemical contamination of sport fish.¹ This includes issuing fish consumption advisories, when appropriate, for the State of California. OEHHA's authorities to conduct these activities are based on mandates in the:

- California Health and Safety Code
 - Section 59009, to protect public health
 - Section 59011, to advise local health authorities
- California Water Code
 - Section 13177.5, to issue health advisories.

The health advisories are posted on OEHHA's website and published in the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) Inland and Ocean Sport Fishing Regulations in their respective sections on public health advisories.²

This report presents guidelines for eating fish from Lake Casitas in Ventura County. The report provides background information and a technical description of how the guidelines were developed. The resulting advice is summarized in the illustrations after the Table of Contents and the List of Figures and Tables.

¹ Sport fish includes all fish and shellfish caught from California waters for non-commercial purposes (e.g., recreational, tribal/cultural, and subsistence practices).

² CDFW's Inland and Ocean Sport Fishing Regulations can be found online at: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Fishing/Inland> and <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Fishing/Ocean>, respectively.

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A GUIDE TO EATING FISH FROM LAKE CASITAS (Ventura County)




Women
(18 – 49 Years)

Children
(1 – 17 Years)




Women
(50+ Years)





Men
(18+ Years)




Choose the Good Fish
Fish are a good source of vitamins, protein, and omega-3s. Eating fish low in harmful chemicals may provide important health benefits.

Avoid the Bad Fish
Advisory is based on mercury and selenium, which can cause health problems such as damage to the nervous system.




3	TOTAL SERVINGS A WEEK	7	TOTAL SERVINGS A WEEK	
OR		OR		
3	TOTAL SERVINGS A WEEK	3	TOTAL SERVINGS A WEEK	 Sunfish Species
OR		OR		 Threadfin Shad
1	TOTAL SERVING A WEEK	3	TOTAL SERVINGS A WEEK	 Common Carp
OR		OR		 Black Bass Species <small>♥ high in omega-3s</small>

Children



Less than 8 ounces

Adults




8 ounces

California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment


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Eat only the skinless fillet



Some chemicals are higher in the skin, fat, and guts.

Eat only the meat





SCAN ME

INTRODUCTION

This report presents guidelines for eating black bass species, Common Carp, sunfish species, and Threadfin Shad from Lake Casitas (Figure 1). Consumption advice is based on levels of mercury or selenium found in these species.

LOCATION

Lake Casitas is located in the Ohai Valley, about 8 miles northwest of the city of Ventura. The lake was formed in 1959 by the construction of an earthen dam on Coyote Creek, about two miles north of its confluence with the Ventura River. Lake Casitas has a storage capacity of 254,000 acre-feet and is operated by the Casitas Municipal Water District.³

FIGURE 1. LOCATION OF LAKE CASITAS



³ Information regarding Lake Casitas was obtained from the US Bureau of Reclamation, online at: <https://www.usbr.gov/projects/index.php?id=276>.

APPROACH USED

The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) used the results from five monitoring studies described in this report to develop the Lake Casitas Advisory. OEHHA uses the following general process in developing consumption advice for sport fish:

- 1) Evaluation of all fish contaminant data available from a water body and selection of appropriate data that meet data quality criteria and sampling plan guidelines.
- 2) Determination of fish species for which adequate data are available to issue fish consumption advice.
- 3) Calculation of an appropriate measure of central tendency (often a weighted arithmetic mean)⁴ and other descriptive statistics of the contaminant data, as appropriate, for a chemical of concern for the selected fish species.
- 4) Comparison of the chemical concentrations with the OEHHA Advisory Tissue Levels (ATLs) for each chemical of concern.
- 5) Development of final advice based on a thorough review of the data and best professional judgment relating to the benefits and risks of consuming a particular fish species.

The ATLs (discussed further in a subsequent section of this report) are chemical levels in fish tissue that are considered acceptable, based on chemical toxicity, for a range of consumption rates. Development of the ATLs also includes consideration of health benefits associated with including fish in the diet (OEHHA, 2008). The ATLs should not be interpreted as static “bright lines,” but as one component of a complex process of data evaluation and interpretation used by OEHHA in the assessment and communication of the benefits and risks of consuming sport fish.

CHEMICALS OF CONCERN

Certain chemicals, because of their toxicity and their ability to accumulate in fish tissue, are of concern for people who eat fish. The majority of fish consumption advisories in California are issued because of mercury, followed by polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and, in a few cases, selenium, polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), or some legacy pesticides (pesticides that are no longer used but remain in the environment).

Mercury is an element found in some rocks and soil. Human activities, such as burning coal and the historical use of mercury to mine gold, also add mercury to the environment. If mercury enters waterways, it can be converted to a more toxic form known as methylmercury, which can pass into and build up in fish. High levels of

⁴ Means are an arithmetic average of individual values and/or composites weighted by number of fish. A weighted average of composites is calculated by multiplying the chemical concentration in each composite by the number of fish in that composite for each species. Products are then summed and divided by the total number of fish in all composites for that species.

methylmercury can harm the brain, especially in fetuses and children, whose brains are still developing.

PCBs are industrial chemicals previously used in electrical transformers, plastics, and lubricating oils, and were often used as flame retardants or electrical insulators. Their use was banned in the 1970s, but they can accumulate in fish because they do not break down easily and they persist in the environment. Depending on the exposure level, PCBs may cause cancer or other health effects, including neurotoxicity, in humans.

Selenium is an element and at low doses is an essential nutrient for many important human health processes, including thyroid regulation and vitamin C metabolism. Higher doses cause selenium toxicity, which can include symptoms ranging from hair loss and gastrointestinal distress to dizziness and tremors.

PBDEs are a class of flame retardants historically used in a variety of consumer products, including furniture, textiles, automotive parts, and electronics. The use of PBDEs in new products was largely phased out by 2013 but, due to their wide usage and persistence in the environment, they are still being detected in fish tissues. PBDEs may affect hormone levels or learning and behavior in children.

Chlordanes, dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT), dieldrin, and toxaphene are pesticides that were banned from use in 1973 (DDT), the late 1980s (chlordanes and dieldrin) and 1990 (toxaphene), but are still found in some fish in certain California water bodies. Depending on the exposure level, these chemicals may cause cancer or adverse effects on the nervous system.

A detailed discussion of the toxicity of these chemicals is presented in “Development of Fish Contaminant Goals and Advisory Tissue Levels for Common Contaminants in California Sport Fish: Chlordane, DDTs, Dieldrin, Methylmercury, PCBs, Selenium, and Toxaphene” (OEHHA, 2008) and “Development of Fish Contaminant Goals and Advisory Tissue Levels for Common Contaminants in California Sport Fish: Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers (PBDEs)” (OEHHA, 2011).

All fish species collected from Lake Casitas and used in advisory development were analyzed for mercury. Some fish were also analyzed for PCBs, PBDEs, selenium, and legacy pesticides as indicated in Table 1. Fish species that do not typically accumulate PCBs or other organic chemicals were not analyzed for these contaminants.

DATA SOURCES

The guidelines for eating fish from Lake Casitas are based on the chemicals detected in fish collected for the five monitoring studies described below. These studies met OEHHA’s data quality criteria, including adequate documentation of sample collection, fish preparation methods (e.g., skinning or filleting), chemical analyses, quality assurance, and sufficiently low detection limits. “Sample,” as used in this report, refers

to an individual fish or a composite of multiple fish for which contaminant data were reported. “Sampling” or “sampled” refers to the act of collecting fish for chemical analysis. The studies or entities contributing data to this advisory are described below.

TOXIC SUBSTANCES MONITORING PROGRAM (TSMP)

The TSMP operated from 1976 to 2003 as a state water quality-monitoring program managed by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) (SWRCB, 2007 and 2013). Its objective was to provide statewide information on the occurrence of toxic substances by monitoring water bodies with known or suspected water quality impairment. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), then known as the California Department of Fish and Game, collected Largemouth Bass from Lake Casitas in 2000, as part of the program. Fish samples were analyzed for chlordanes, DDTs, dieldrin, mercury, selenium, and toxaphene.

CONTAMINANTS IN FISH FROM CALIFORNIA LAKES AND RESERVOIRS, 2007 – 2008 (SWAMP)

The Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP), managed by the SWRCB in cooperation with the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (LARWQCB), monitors water quality in California’s surface waters. This survey of inland water bodies was the State’s largest assessment of chemical contaminants in sport fish. The survey sampled popular fishing sites at 272 lakes and reservoirs from 2007 to 2008 (SWRCB, 2010). The SWRCB used the data from this survey to characterize statewide water quality conditions. The program collected Common Carp and Largemouth Bass from Lake Casitas in 2007, which were analyzed for chlordanes, DDTs, dieldrin, mercury, PBDEs, and PCBs. Common Carp were also analyzed for selenium.

LAKES SPORTFISH CONTAMINATION STUDY, 2010 AND 2013 (LARWQCB)

The SWRCB develops water quality objectives and enforces implementation plans that protect the beneficial uses of waters in the State with consideration of the local differences between regions. One of these water quality objectives sets a numeric target for the concentration of methylmercury in fish tissue. The nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards work in collaboration with the SWRCB to assist in that objective.⁵ The Boards coordinate ongoing sampling efforts to monitor contaminant levels, including mercury and PCBs, in sport fish caught from lakes and reservoirs within their regional boundaries. The LARWQCB collected Common Carp, Largemouth Bass, and Redear Sunfish in 2010 from Lake Casitas. The LARWQCB also collected Common Carp and Largemouth Bass in 2013. All fish were analyzed for mercury, and Common Carp collected in 2013 were also analyzed for PCBs.

⁵ Further information on the SRWCB and the Regional Water Quality Control Boards can be found online at: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/mercury/ and https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/about_us/contact_us/rwqcb_directory.html.

SURVEY OF MERCURY EXPOSURE AND RISK IN WILDLIFE IN CALIFORNIA LAKES AND RESERVOIRS, 2012 – 2013 (SWAMP)

SWAMP conducted a bird, prey fish, and sport fish sampling survey at lakes and reservoirs throughout California in 2012 and 2013. These data supported the development of a tool that estimates mercury exposure and risk to sport fish and piscivorous wildlife using mercury concentrations in prey fish at a water body (Ackerman et al., 2015). This program sampled Largemouth Bass and Threadfin Shad from Lake Casitas in 2013, which were analyzed for mercury.

LONG-TERM MONITORING OF BASS LAKES AND RESERVOIRS IN CALIFORNIA, 2015 – ONGOING (SWAMP)

This monitoring study is a multi-year effort initiated in 2015 to document the status and trends related to contamination in sport fish from California lakes and reservoirs where bass species reside (Davis et al., 2022). In 2019, the program collected Common Carp, Largemouth Bass, Redear Sunfish, and Threadfin Shad from Lake Casitas, which were analyzed for mercury and selenium.

FISH SAMPLED FROM LAKE CASITAS

The fish sampling data used in this advisory were retrieved from the California Environmental Data Exchange Network (CEDEN),⁶ the state's repository for environmental data. Samples were excluded when the fish were not legal size to take or did not meet OEHHA's criteria for minimum "edible" size, based on species size at maturity and professional judgment (as described in OEHHA, 2022). A summary of all fish species evaluated for this advisory is shown in Table 1, including the name of the species, number of samples collected, total number of fish, project name, year sampled, and contaminants analyzed.

⁶ Online at: <http://ceden.waterboards.ca.gov/AdvancedQueryTool>.

TABLE 1. FISH SAMPLES EVALUATED FOR THE LAKE CASITAS ADVISORY

Common Name	Scientific Name	Number of Samples	Total Number of Fish	Project	Year Collected	Contaminants Analyzed ^a
Common Carp	<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>	2	10	SWAMP	2007	Chlordanes, DDTs, Dieldrin, Hg, PBDEs, PCBs
		1	10	SWAMP	2007	Se
		1	3	LARWQCB	2010	Hg
		1	5	LARWQCB	2013	Hg, PCBs
		1	6	SWAMP	2019	Hg, Se
Largemouth Bass	<i>Micropterus salmoides</i>	1	6	TSM ^b	2000	Chlordanes, DDTs, Dieldrin, Hg, Se, Toxaphene
		2	10	SWAMP	2007	Chlordanes, DDTs, Dieldrin, PBDEs, PCBs
		14	14	SWAMP	2007	Hg
		5	5	LARWQCB	2010	Hg
		6	6	LARWQCB	2013	Hg
		10	10	SWAMP	2013	Hg
		20	20	SWAMP	2019	Hg
		2	20	SWAMP	2019	Se
Redear Sunfish	<i>Lepomis microlophus</i>	1	5	LARWQCB	2010	Hg
		1	10	SWAMP	2019	Hg, Se
Threadfin Shad	<i>Dorosoma petenense</i>	10	10	SWAMP ^c	2013	Hg
		2	20	SWAMP ^c	2019	Hg, Se

^aData for organic chemicals (e.g. chlordanes, DDTs, dieldrin, PCBs or toxaphene) generated prior to 2000 were excluded from the analysis because data that are more recent are considered more reliable due to improved analytical methods and are likely to be more representative of fish caught today.

^bStudy report did not specify whether skin was removed from fillets prior to tissue analysis.

^cSamples were analyzed as whole organisms, including the head, skin, internal organs, muscle, and bones.

Abbreviations: DDTs, dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethanes; Hg, mercury; PBDEs, polybrominated diphenyl ethers; PCBs, polychlorinated biphenyls; Se, selenium

CHEMICAL CONCENTRATIONS

As shown in Table 1, samples were analyzed for one or more of the following: total mercury, selenium, chlordanes (2–5 congeners), DDTs (6 congeners), dieldrin,

toxaphene, PBDEs (6–7 congeners), and PCBs (46–53 congeners).⁷ Among the chemicals analyzed in fish tissue samples from Lake Casitas, only mercury and selenium levels were sufficiently high to impact consumption advice.

All fish samples were prepared as skinless fillets, except for Threadfin Shad, which were analyzed as whole organisms, including the head, skin, internal organs, muscle, and bones. The fillet preparation method for Largemouth Bass was not recorded for the TSMP study. Samples were analyzed as individual fish or composites.

For this advisory, OEHHA used the weighted (by the number of individual fish) average (arithmetic mean) of the chemical concentrations (in wet weight) for each fish species to estimate average human exposure.

MERCURY

Samples were analyzed for total mercury, as either individual fish or composite samples, using a direct mercury analyzer (DMA) at the Marine Pollution Studies Laboratory (MPSL) at Moss Landing Marine Laboratories. Some studies used other laboratories for analyses. The DMA method utilizes thermal decomposition and atomic absorption. OEHHA assumed all mercury detected was methylmercury, which is the most common form found in fish and is also the more toxic form (Bloom, 1992). Table 2 shows the averages and ranges for total length,⁸ as well as mercury concentrations in each fish species. Depending on the study, the DMA method detection limits (MDLs)⁹ for total mercury were reported at 3, 4 or 12 parts per billion (ppb), and the reporting limits (RLs)¹⁰ were 9, 12, or 36 ppb. Although the MDL and RL were not reported in the TSMP study, mercury was detected at concentrations consistent with other studies. For this reason, these data were included in the calculation of sample means.

PCBs, PBDEs, AND PESTICIDES

Pesticides, PBDEs, and PCBs in either individual fish or composite samples were analyzed by gas chromatography at the CDFW Water Pollution Control Laboratory. Where applicable, the concentrations presented were the sum of the detected analytes (parent compound, congeners, or metabolites) for chlordanes, DDTs, PCBs, and PBDEs. Individual congeners or metabolites with concentrations reported as non-detects were assumed to be zero (due to relatively low MDLs or RLs). This is a

⁷Congeners are related compounds with similar chemical forms. Five and six congeners are typically analyzed for chlordanes and DDTs, respectively. Of the 209 possible PBDE and PCB congeners, 6–7 and 48–54 are generally analyzed, respectively. See the OEHHA (2022) sampling protocol available online at

<https://oehha.ca.gov/media/downloads/fish/report/fishadvisorysamplinganalysisprotocolreport2022.pdf>.

⁸Total length is the maximum length of the fish, measured from the tip of the closed mouth to the tip of the pinched tail fin.

⁹The MDL is the lowest quantity of a chemical that can be distinguished (as greater than zero) in a sample.

¹⁰The RL is the lowest quantity of a chemical that can be accurately quantified in a sample.

standard method of handling non-detect values for PCBs and other chemicals with multiple congeners or metabolites in a given sample when detection levels are adequate (US EPA, 2000a).

SELENIUM

The MPSL analyzed species collected from Lake Casitas for selenium as composite samples, using inductively coupled plasma-mass spectrometry (ICP-MS). The ICP-MS method uses desolvation, atomization, and ionization with ion separation based on a mass-to-charge ratio to detect the total selenium concentration in a sample. Depending on the study, the ICP-MS MDLs for selenium were reported at 100 or 230 ppb, and the RLs were 300 or 700 ppb. Table 3 shows the averages and ranges for total length, as well as selenium concentrations in each fish species.

Concentrations of chlordanes, dieldrin, DDTs, PBDEs, PCBs, and toxaphene were lower than the corresponding ATL threshold values for daily consumption (OEHHA, 2008 and 2011). With the exception of assessing for multiple chemical exposures, these chemicals were not considered further for developing consumption advice and are not shown in this report.

TABLE 2. MERCURY CONCENTRATIONS IN FISH FROM LAKE CASITAS

Species from Lake Casitas	Number of Samples ^a	Total Number of Fish	Mean ^b Total Length (mm)	Range of Total Lengths ^c (mm)	Mercury (ppb)	
					Mean ^b	Range ^c
Common Carp	5	24	675	580 – 778	164	120 – 199
Largemouth Bass	56	61	396	314 – 529	422	167 – 799
Redear Sunfish	2	15	241	178 – 280	57	38 – 67
Threadfin Shad	12	30	65	54 – 80	62	46 – 69

^aSamples were prepared as skinless fillets, except as noted in the footnotes to Table 1.

^bMeans are an arithmetic average of individual values and/or a weighted average of composites.

^cRange of individuals and/or range of the composites.

TABLE 3. SELENIUM CONCENTRATIONS IN FISH FROM LAKE CASITAS

Species from Lake Casitas	Number of Samples ^a	Total Number of Fish	Mean ^b Total Length (mm)	Range of Total Lengths ^c (mm)	Selenium (ppb)	
					Mean ^b	Range ^c
Common Carp	2	16	663	580 – 735	1,795	1,120 – 2,920
Largemouth Bass	3	26	391	345 – 462	2,298	709 – 4,190
Redear Sunfish	1	10	251	210 – 280	840	n/a
Threadfin Shad	2	20	64	57 – 80	2,005	700 – 3,310

^aSamples were prepared as skinless fillets, except as noted in the footnotes to Table 1.

^bMeans are an arithmetic average of individual values and/or a weighted average of composites.

^cRange of individuals and/or range of the composites.

n/a = not applicable due to a single sample

DEVELOPMENT OF GUIDELINES FOR EATING FISH FROM LAKE CASITAS

The OEHHA fish advisory process considers the health benefits of fish consumption as well as the risk from exposure to the chemical contaminants found in fish. Benefits are included in the advisory process because there is considerable evidence and scientific consensus that fish should be part of a healthy well-balanced diet. Fish contain many nutrients that are important for general health and, in particular, help promote optimal growth and development of babies and young children, and may reduce the incidence of heart disease in adults (FDA/US EPA, 2017; American Heart Association, 2016; OEHHA, 2008; Institute of Medicine, 2007; Kris-Etherton et al., 2002). Fish are a significant source of the beneficial omega-3 fatty acids, docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) (USDA/USDHHS, 2020; Weaver et al., 2008).

As part of a healthy US-style dietary pattern at the 2,000-calorie level, the “Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020 – 2025” (USDA/USDHHS, 2020) recommends consuming eight ounces of seafood¹¹ per week. Young children are advised to eat proportionately smaller amounts. “Women who are pregnant or lactating should consume at least 8 and up to 12 ounces of a variety of seafood per week from choices that are lower in methylmercury.” Additionally, “based on FDA [US Food and Drug Administration] and EPA’s [US Environmental Protection Agency] advice,^[12] depending on body weight, some women should choose seafood lowest in methylmercury or eat less seafood than the amounts in the Healthy U.S.-Style Dietary Pattern” and avoid certain species (USDA/USDHHS, 2020). The species of fish that people eat is an important factor in determining the net beneficial effects of fish consumption. For example, studies have shown that children of mothers who ate low-mercury fish during pregnancy scored better on cognitive tests compared to children of mothers who did not eat fish or ate high-mercury fish (Oken et al., 2005 and 2008). Accordingly, because of

¹¹ Seafood as used here refers to fish and shellfish from freshwater and marine environments.

¹² Online at: <https://www.fda.gov/food/consumers/advice-about-eating-fish>.

the high mercury content of certain fish species, the FDA and the US EPA recommend that women who are pregnant (or might become pregnant) or breastfeeding, and young children avoid consuming shark, Swordfish, tilefish (Gulf of Mexico), Bigeye Tuna, marlin, Orange Roughy, and King Mackerel (FDA/US EPA, 2017).

To address the potential health concerns associated with exposure to contaminants in sport fish, OEHHA has established ATLS for chemicals that are known to accumulate in the edible tissues of fish. ATLS consider both the toxicity of the chemical and potential benefits of eating fish. OEHHA uses the ATLS to determine the maximum number of servings per week that consumers can eat safely, for each species and from each location, to limit their exposure to these contaminants. Consumers can use OEHHA's guidance when choosing which fish and how much to eat as part of an overall healthy diet.

There are two sets of ATLS for methylmercury in fish because of the age-related toxicity of this chemical (OEHHA, 2008). The fetus and children are more sensitive to the toxic effects of methylmercury. Thus, the ATLS for the sensitive population, including women who might become pregnant (typically 18–49 years of age) and children 1–17 years of age, are lower than those for women 50 years and older and men 18 years and older. The lower ATL values for the sensitive population provide additional protection to allow for normal growth and development of the brain and nervous system of unborn babies and children. Detailed discussion about the toxicity of common fish contaminants and health benefits of fish consumption, as well as derivation of the ATLS, are provided in “Development of Fish Contaminant Goals and Advisory Tissue Levels for Common Contaminants in California Sport Fish: Chlordane, DDTs, Dieldrin, Methylmercury, PCBs, Selenium, and Toxaphene” (OEHHA, 2008) and “Development of Fish Contaminant Goals and Advisory Tissue Levels for Common Contaminants in California Sport Fish: Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers (PBDEs)” (OEHHA, 2011). A list of the ATLS used in this report is presented in the Appendix.

For each fish species in this advisory, OEHHA compared the mean chemical concentrations detected in the fillet to the corresponding ATLS to establish the maximum number of servings per week that can be safely consumed (see Appendix). For fish fillets, a serving size is considered to be 8 ounces, prior to cooking, or about the size and thickness of a hand. Children should be given smaller servings. For smaller fish species, several individual fish may be required to yield a serving.

The consumption advice for a fish species is initially based on the chemical with the lowest allowable number of servings per week. Because some chemicals, such as mercury and PCBs, are known to have similar adverse effects, additivity of toxicity is assumed in such cases and may be assessed using multiple chemical exposure methodology (US EPA, 1989 and 2000b). If two or more chemicals with similar adverse effects are present in fish tissue, multiple chemical exposure methodology involving hazard index calculations is employed. This may result in advising fewer servings per week than would be the case for the presence of either chemical alone, in a similar concentration. The potential effect of multiple chemical exposures (mercury, DDTs, and

PCBs) was assessed in Common Carp and Largemouth Bass and did not affect advice. Advice for all species in this advisory was based solely on mercury or selenium concentrations.

OEHHA recommends that individuals strive to meet the US dietary guidelines' seafood consumption recommendations,¹³ while also adhering to federal and OEHHA recommendations to limit the consumption of fish with higher contaminant levels. The advice discussed in the following section represents the maximum recommended number of servings per week for listed fish species. People should eat no more than the recommended number of servings for each fish species or species group. When noted, OEHHA's consumption advice for a particular fish species can be extended to other closely related fish species¹⁴ known to accumulate similar levels of contaminants.

Consumption advice should not be combined. That is, if a person chooses to eat a serving of fish from the "one-serving-a-week" category, then they should not eat any other fish from any source (including commercial) until the next week. If a person chooses to eat a serving of fish from the "two-servings-per-week" category, they can combine fish species from that category, or eat one serving of fish from that category and one from a category that recommends more than two servings per week (if available), for a total of two servings in that week. Then they should not eat any other fish from any source (including commercial) until the following week.

CONSUMPTION ADVICE FOR FISH FROM LAKE CASITAS

OEHHA's sampling and analysis protocol (OEHHA, 2022) requires that a minimum of nine edible-size fish of a species that may be legally caught are collected and analyzed before an advisory can be developed for the primary contaminant of concern. This is to ensure the sample dataset is representative of the fish species population in the water body. For Lake Casitas, the sample size criterion was met for the following species: Common Carp, Largemouth Bass, Redear Sunfish, and Threadfin Shad. There were not sufficient data to evaluate other species that may be found in this water body. For fish species found in Lake Casitas that are not included in this advisory, OEHHA recommends following the statewide advisory for lakes and reservoirs without site-specific advice.¹⁵

The following advice is based solely on mercury or selenium concentrations. The sensitive population is defined as women ages 18 to 49 years and children ages 1 to 17 years, and the general population is defined as women 50 years and older and men 18 years and older.

¹³ Online at: <https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/>.

¹⁴ Fish species within the same genus are most closely related, and family is the next level of relationship.

¹⁵ Online at: <https://oehha.ca.gov/advisories/statewide-advisory-eating-fish-californias-lakes-and-reservoirs-without-site-specific>.

BLACK BASS SPECIES (BASED ON LARGEMOUTH BASS)

Black bass species are one of the most targeted species of freshwater game fish in California. OEHHA groups black bass species because they have similar predatory diets and likely comparable chemical uptake (Long and Fisher, 2000). They are also known to hybridize (Pierce and Van Den Avyle, 1997), largely due to species introductions for angling purposes and weak genetic barriers between members of the genus (Thongda et al., 2020). OEHHA evaluated mercury concentrations in black bass species in many water bodies in California and has found a similar range of mercury concentrations when two or more of these species were caught from the same water body. Selenium levels are also expected to show a similar pattern in black bass species. Therefore, OEHHA extends the consumption advice for Largemouth Bass to other black bass species, including Redeye, Smallmouth, and Spotted Bass.

The mean mercury and selenium concentrations in Largemouth Bass from Lake Casitas were 422 and 2,298 ppb, respectively. Based on the concentration of mercury, OEHHA recommends a maximum of one serving a week of black bass species from Lake Casitas for the sensitive population, and a maximum of two servings a week for the general population.

COMMON CARP

The mean mercury and selenium concentrations in Common Carp from Lake Casitas were 164 and 1,795 ppb, respectively. Based on the concentration of mercury, OEHHA recommends a maximum of one serving a week of Common Carp species from Lake Casitas for the sensitive population, and a maximum of three servings a week for the general population.

SUNFISH SPECIES (BASED ON REDEAR SUNFISH)

OEHHA groups sunfish species due to a known ability to hybridize (Avisé and Smith, 1974) and extensive dietary overlap (Kirby, 1982), which suggests a similar contaminant uptake. OEHHA has evaluated mercury concentrations in sunfish species from many water bodies in California and has found a similar range of mercury concentrations when two or more of these species were caught from the same water body. Selenium concentrations in sunfish species in this region of California are generally similar within the same water body. Therefore, OEHHA extends the consumption advice for Redear Sunfish to other sunfish species including Bluegill, Green Sunfish, and Pumpkinseed.

The mean mercury and selenium concentrations in Redear Sunfish from Lake Casitas were 57 ppb and 840 ppb, respectively. Based on mercury, OEHHA recommends a maximum of three servings a week of sunfish species for the sensitive population. Based on these low levels of mercury and selenium in Redear sunfish, OEHHA recommends a maximum of seven servings a week for the general population.

THREADFIN SHAD

The mean mercury and selenium concentrations in Threadfin Shad from Lake Casitas were 62 and 2,005 ppb, respectively. OEHHA recommends a maximum of three servings a week of Threadfin Shad for the sensitive population, based on mercury or selenium, and a maximum of three servings a week for the general population, based on selenium.

RECOMMENDED MAXIMUM NUMBER OF SERVINGS

The recommended maximum numbers of servings per week for fish from Lake Casitas are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4. RECOMMENDED MAXIMUM NUMBER OF SERVINGS PER WEEK FOR FISH FROM LAKE CASITAS

Fish Species	Women 18–49 years and Children 1–17 years		Women 50 years and older and Men 18 years and older	
	Number of Servings	Risk Driver	Number of Servings	Risk Driver
Black Bass Species	1	Hg	2	Hg
Common Carp	1	Hg	3	Hg
Sunfish Species	3	Hg	7	–
Threadfin Shad	3	Hg or Se	3	Se

Hg, mercury

Se, selenium

“–” denotes that all chemicals analyzed (Hg and Se) were below levels that would restrict consumption to less than seven servings a week

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APPENDIX. ADVISORY TISSUE LEVELS

Advisory Tissue Levels (ATLs; OEHHA, 2008 and 2011) guide the development of advice for people eating sport fish. ATLs are levels of contaminants found in fish that correspond to the maximum numbers of recommended fish servings. OEHHA uses ATLs to provide advice to prevent consumers from being exposed to:

- More than the reference dose¹⁶ on an average daily basis for chemicals not known to cause cancer, such as methylmercury, or
- For cancer-causing chemicals, a risk level greater than one additional cancer case in a population of 10,000 people consuming fish at the given consumption rate over a lifetime. This cancer risk level is the maximum acceptable risk level recommended by the US EPA (2000b) for fish advisories.

For each chemical, ATLs were determined for both cancer and non-cancer risk, if appropriate, for one to seven eight-ounce servings per week. The most health-protective ATLs for each chemical, selected from either cancer or non-cancer based risk, are shown in the table below for zero to seven servings per week. When the guidelines for eating fish from a water body are followed, exposure to chemicals in fish from that water body would be at or below the average daily reference dose or the cancer risk probability of one in 10,000.

ADVISORY TISSUE LEVELS FOR SELECTED ANALYTES

Contaminant	Consumption Frequency Categories (8-ounce servings/week) ^a and ATLs (in ppb)							
	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Chlordanes	≤ 80	>80–90	>90–110	>110–140	>140–190	>190–280	>280–560	>560
DDTs	≤ 220	>220–260	>260–310	>310–390	>390–520	>520–1,000	>1,000–2,100	>2,100
Dieldrin	≤ 7	>7–8	>8–9	>9–11	>11–15	>15–23	>23–46	>46
MeHg ^b (Women 18–49 and children 1–17)	≤ 31	>31–36	>36–44	>44–55	>55–70	>70–150	>150–440	>440
MeHg (Women ≥ 50 and men ≥ 18)	≤ 94	>94–109	>109–130	>130–160	>160–220	>220–440	>440–1,310	>1,310
PBDEs	≤ 45	>45–52	>52–63	>63–78	>78–100	>100–210	>210–630	>630
PCBs	≤ 9	>9–10	>10–13	>13–16	>16–21	>21–42	>42–120	>120
Selenium	≤ 1,000	>1,000–1,200	>1,200–1,400	>1,400–1,800	>1,800–2,500	>2,500–4,900	>4,900–15,000	>15,000
Toxaphene	≤ 87	>87–100	>100–120	>120–150	>150–200	>200–300	>300–610	>610

^aServing sizes (prior to cooking, wet weight) are based on an average 160-pound person. Individuals weighing less than 160 pounds should eat proportionately smaller amounts.

^bAll mercury detected is assumed to be methylmercury (MeHg), which is the most common form found in fish and is also the more toxic form (Bloom, 1992).

¹⁶ The reference dose is an estimate of the maximum daily exposure to a chemical likely to be without significant risk of harmful health effects over a lifetime.