INFORMATION ABOUT EATING FISH FROM SAN LUIS RESERVOIR AND O'NEILL FOREBAY (MERCED COUNTY)

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)
California Environmental Protection Agency
October 2017

Why did OEHHA develop advisories for eating fish from San Luis Reservoir and O'Neill Forebay?

OEHHA developed advisories for San Luis Reservoir and O'Neill Forebay because of mercury and PCBs found in the fish caught from these water bodies. The San Luis Reservoir and O'Neill Forebay are located in Merced County, 12 miles west of Los Banos on State Route 152. These advisories are part of an ongoing effort by OEHHA to provide safe-eating advice for fish in different California water bodies.

Why should I eat fish?

- Low-contaminant fish are an important part of a healthy, well-balanced diet. The American Heart Association recommends eating at least two servings of fish each week.

- Fish are a good source of protein, vitamins, and are a primary dietary source of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Eating low-contaminant fish while pregnant may help the baby's brain develop.

Which chemicals are of concern for people eating fish from San Luis Reservoir and O'Neill Forebay?

- Mercury
    - Mercury is a metal that comes from natural sources, mining, and air fallout from burning coal and other fuels. It is the most commonly found contaminant in fish.
    - Too much methylmercury, the form of mercury found in fish, can harm the brain, especially in fetuses, babies, and children. Mothers can pass methylmercury to their babies during pregnancy.
    - Because fetuses, babies, and children are especially sensitive to mercury, OEHHA has one set of advice for the amount of mercury-containing fish that women age 18-45 years and children should eat, and another set of advice for women 46 years and older and men 18 years and older.

- Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)
    - PCBs are industrial chemicals. While banned in the 1970s, they persist for many years in the environment and are still found in the air and water from spills, leaks, and improper disposal.
    - High levels of PCBs can cause health problems. Some forms of PCBs caused cancer in animal studies.
    - PCBs can build up to very high levels in the skin, fat, and some internal organs of fish. That is why OEHHA recommends eating only skinless fillet (meat) of fish.

How did OEHHA determine the consumption guidelines for fish from San Luis Reservoir and O'Neill Forebay?

- OEHHA compared chemical levels in fish caught from San Luis Reservoir and O'Neill Forebay to levels that are considered safe for human consumption.

- OEHHA's consumption guidelines balance the risks and benefits of fish consumption.

What does OEHHA recommend for people who want to eat fish from San Luis Reservoir?

- OEHHA recommends the amount and type of fish that can be eaten each week as "servings". A serving is about the size and thickness of your hand for fish fillets. Give children smaller servings.

- Women 18-45 years and children 1-17 years
    - Should not eat black bass species, Common Carp, or Striped Bass
    - Can eat:
        - 1 total serving per week of American Shad, or
        - 2 total servings per week of Tule Perch

- Women 46 years and older and men age 18 years and older
    - Can eat:
        - 1 total serving per week of black bass species, Common Carp, or Striped Bass, or
        - 2 total servings per week of American Shad, or
        - 5 total servings per week of Tule Perch

What does OEHHA recommend for people who want to eat fish from O'Neill Forebay?

- Women 18-45 years and children 1-17 years
    - Can eat:

        - 1 serving per week of black bass species, catfish species, Striped Bass, or
        - 6 total servings per week of Inland Silverside

- Women 46 years and older and men age 18 years and older
    - Can eat:
        - 1 serving per week of catfish species, or
        - 2 total servings per week of black bass species or Striped Bass, or
        - 7 total servings per week of Inland Silverside
        -
- For additional fish species found in San Luis Reservoir and O'Neill Forebay and not included in this advisory, OEHHA recommends following the statewide advisory for eating fish from California's lakes and reservoirs without site-specific advice.

What else can I do to protect my health and the health of my family?

- Eat a variety of fish.
- Eat smaller (younger) fish of legal size.
- Eat only the skinless fillet or meat portion of fish.
- Thoroughly cook the fish, allow the juice to drain away.
- Learn about OEHHA's guidelines for eating sport fish in California:
    - Visit www.oehha.ca.gov (click on "FISH", then "Fish Advisories"), or call OEHHA at (916) 324-7572 or (510) 622-3170
    - Check the Freshwater or Ocean Sport Fishing Regulations booklets from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, or visit https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Regulations

A GUIDE TO EATING FISH *from* SAN LUIS RESERVOIR (MERCED COUNTY)

Eat the Good Fish
Eating fish that are low in chemicals may provide health benefits to children and adults.

Avoid the Bad Fish
Eating fish with higher levels of chemicals like mercury or PCBs may cause health problems in children and adults.

Choose the Right Fish
Chemicals may be more harmful to unborn babies and children.

Women (18-45 Years) / Children (1-17 Years)	Women (46+ Years) / Men (18+ Years)
2 TOTAL SERVINGS A WEEK	**5** TOTAL SERVINGS A WEEK
OR	OR
1 TOTAL SERVING A WEEK	**2** TOTAL SERVINGS A WEEK
	OR
0 DO NOT EAT	**1** TOTAL SERVING A WEEK

Tule Perch

American Shad
high in Omega-3s

Striped Bass

Common Carp

Black Bass Species

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

For Adults

For Children

California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assesment
web www.oehha.ca.gov/fish
email fish@oehha.ca.gov
phone (916) 324-7572

Eat only the skinless fillet

Eat only the meat

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

A GUIDE TO EATING FISH *from* O'NEILL FOREBAY (MERCED COUNTY)

Eat the Good Fish
Eating fish that are low in chemicals may provide health benefits to children and adults.

Avoid the Bad Fish
Eating fish with higher levels of chemicals like mercury or PCBs may cause health problems in children and adults.

Choose the Right Fish
Chemicals may be more harmful to unborn babies and children.

Women (18-45 Years) / Children (1-17 Years)	Women (46+ Years) / Men (18+ Years)
6 TOTAL SERVINGS A WEEK	7 TOTAL SERVINGS A WEEK
OR	OR
1 TOTAL SERVING A WEEK	2 TOTAL SERVINGS A WEEK
OR	OR
1 TOTAL SERVING A WEEK	1 TOTAL SERVING A WEEK

Inland Silverside

Striped Bass
high in omega-3s

Black Bass Species
high in omega-3s

Catfish

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

For Adults

For Children

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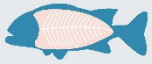
Eat only the skinless fillet



Eat only the meat

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