

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment



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OEHHA Releases Report and Safe Eating Guidelines For Fish From San Pablo Reservoir

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SACRAMENTO – The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) today released a new report and safe eating guidelines for fish caught from San Pablo Reservoir in Contra Costa County.

The guidelines provide information to help consumers choose the safest fish to eat. They also recommend how often fish can be eaten to promote health benefits and avoid health risks.

“These health guidelines are valuable tools to help consumers choose which fish to include in their diet and which to avoid,” said OEHHA Director Dr. Joan Denton. OEHHA is part of the California Environmental Protection Agency.

Fish are good sources of protein and heart-healthy nutrients. However, health benefits from eating fish must be balanced against risks from contaminants. The guidelines encourage fishers and their families to eat fish with the lowest levels of contaminants.

The new guidelines replace two interim public health notifications for San Pablo Reservoir that were issued by Contra Costa County, in consultation with OEHHA, in 2000 and 2004.

Almost all fish contain some mercury. Most of the mercury present in fish is in the form of methylmercury. High exposures to methylmercury can affect the nervous system in children and harm learning ability, language skills, and memory.

Samples from fish in the reservoir also contain other contaminants, including dieldrin and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). Dieldrin and PCBs have been found to cause cancer in animals and PCBs may harm the nervous system in children similar to methylmercury. Although both chemicals are no longer used, they can persist in the environment and are still found in some fish.

The new guidelines recommend that women ages 18-45 and children may eat five servings per week of rainbow trout or up to two servings per week of black crappie. Men over 17 and women over 45 may eat five servings per week of black crappie or trout or one serving per week of largemouth, smallmouth or spotted bass.

California Environmental Protection Agency

The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption.

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All people should avoid eating catfish and carp caught from the reservoir. Women ages 18-45 and children also should not eat bass from the reservoir.

The recommendations are based on fish servings that are about the size and thickness of a person's hand. For adults, a serving is approximately 8 ounces of uncooked fish or 6 ounces of cooked fish. Children up to age 12 should eat about half as much.

The new guidelines are based on studies by the California Department of Fish and Game and the East Bay Municipal Utility District. Water from the reservoir is safe to drink and is a major source of drinking water for the Bay Area.

The guidelines, a fact sheet and the 37-page report can be viewed at www.oehha.ca.gov.