



Press Release

California Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment
Lauren Zeise, Ph.D., Acting Director

For Immediate Release:

November 2, 2016

Contact:

Sam Delson (916) 324-0955 (O)
(916) 764-0955 (C)

Fish Advisory for the Alamo River and the New River Offers Safe Eating Advice for Channel Catfish, Carp, and Tilapia

SACRAMENTO – A new state fish advisory issued today offers safe eating advice for three species of fish from the Alamo River and the New River in Imperial County.

“Eating fish low in chemical contaminants can help reduce the risk of heart disease and fish are an excellent source of protein,” said Dr. Lauren Zeise, acting director of the California Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA). “These guidelines are designed to balance the health benefits of eating fish against the risks from exposure to chemicals in fish caught from the Alamo River and the New River.”

When consuming fish from the Alamo River, women ages 18-45 and children ages 1-17 can safely eat two servings per week of Channel Catfish, or three total servings per week of carp or Tilapia. Women age 46 and older and men age 18 and older can safely eat three servings per week of carp, Channel Catfish, or Tilapia.

When consuming fish from the New River, women ages 18-45 and children ages 1-17 can safely eat one serving per week of carp, or four total servings per week of Tilapia. Women (18-45 years) and children (1-17 years) should not eat any Channel Catfish from the New River.

Women age 46 and older and men age 18 and older can safely eat one serving per week of Channel Catfish, or two total servings per week of carp, or four total servings per week of Tilapia from the New River.

One serving is eight ounces prior to cooking, which for fish fillets is roughly the size and thickness of your hand. Children should be given smaller servings.

The recommendations developed by OEHHA for each fish species are based on the levels of mercury, the pesticide DDT, PCBs, and selenium measured in fish from the Alamo River and the New River in Imperial County. The Alamo River and the New River flow from Baja California to the Salton Sea.

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

DDT and its byproducts (DDTs) are pesticides that can cause health problems including cancer or harmful effects on the nervous system. PCBs can affect the nervous system, and can cause cancer and other health effects. Selenium is an essential nutrient for many health processes, but high levels of selenium can cause health problems including hair loss, gastrointestinal distress, and tremors.

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

The health advisory and eating advice for the Alamo River and the New River– as well as eating guidelines for other fish species and California bodies of water – are available at <http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish/advisories>. Pictorial fish consumption advice is also available on that page in both English and Spanish.

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.

###