



## INFORMATION ABOUT EATING FISH FROM THE UPPER FEATHER RIVER

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)  
California Environmental Protection Agency  
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### Why did OEHHA develop the advisory for eating fish from the Upper Feather River?

The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) developed the advisory for the Upper Feather River based on findings of mercury in fish. The advice applies to the major tributaries: the North Fork, Middle Fork, South Fork, the West Branch and their creeks. They drain into Lake Oroville, where the water is released to the Lower Feather River or Thermalito Forebay and Thermalito Afterbay. This advisory is part of OEHHA's evaluation of the water bodies associated with the Feather River watershed. Advisories have also been developed for Lake Oroville, Lower Feather River, as well as Thermalito Forebay and Thermalito Afterbay.

### Why should I eat fish?

- Fish is an important part of a healthy, well-balanced diet. The American Heart Association recommends eating at least two servings of fish each week.
- Fish provides a good source of protein, vitamins, and heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. It is important for pregnant women to eat fish because omega-3 fatty acids help the baby's brain develop.

### How does mercury get into fish and shellfish?

- The Feather River watershed contains many gold mining sites where mercury was used to extract the gold.
- When mercury in the water gets into the mud, it is changed by bacteria to the more toxic form, methylmercury, which is taken up by aquatic plants and animals.
- Methylmercury then gets passed up the food chain from plants and animals to larger, older fish, where it builds up in the fish tissue.

### What are the health concerns from eating fish with mercury?

- Methylmercury can harm the brain and nervous system of people.
  - Unborn babies and children are more sensitive to the toxic effects of methylmercury. Thus, women who might become pregnant (typically 18 to

45 years of age) and children (1 to 17 years) are considered the sensitive population.

- Women over 45 years and men have lower risk and can eat more fish.

### **How do mercury levels in fish from the Upper Feather River compare to nearby water bodies?**

- The trout species (rainbow, brook, and brown) found in the Upper Feather River tributaries and creeks had the lowest mercury levels compared to other fish from the Lake Oroville area. These fish can be eaten at least three times a week, and are high in omega-3 fatty acids.
- The black bass mercury levels were moderate. They were similar to those from the Thermalito Forebay and Thermalito Afterbay, but lower than those from Lake Oroville or the Lower Feather River. Black bass can be eaten at least once a week.
- Pikeminnow had the highest mercury levels and the most restrictive advice. The levels were similar to those found in pikeminnow from the Lower Feather River and Thermalito Forebay and Thermalito Afterbay. Pikeminnow should not be eaten by the sensitive population.

### **How did OEHHA determine the guidelines for fish from the Upper Feather River?**

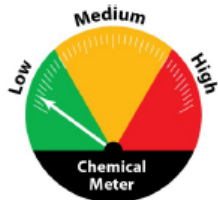
- OEHHA compared chemical levels in fish from this river to acceptable levels of human exposure.
- OEHHA's advice balances the risks and benefits of eating fish.

### **What else can I do to protect my health and my family's?**

- Eat a variety of fish, especially those low in chemicals and high in omega-3s.
- Eat smaller (younger) fish of legal size.
- Eat only the skinless fillet or meat portion of fish and shellfish you catch.
- 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](http://www.oehha.ca.gov) (click on "FISH", then "Fish Advisories"), or call OEHHA at (916) 323-7319 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>

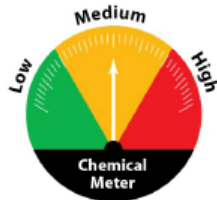
# A Healthy Guide to Eating Fish from the Upper Feather River

## Women 18-45 years and children 1-17 years

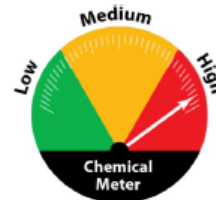


Rainbow, brook, or brown trout

= high in omega-3s



Black bass



Pikeminnow

3 servings a week



1 serving a week

Do not eat

## Women over 45 years and men can safely eat more fish

Trout  
7 servings a week



Black bass  
2 servings a week



Pikeminnow  
1 serving a week

### What is a serving?



For Adults For Children

The recommended serving is the size and thickness of your hand. Give children smaller servings.

### Why eat fish?

Eating fish is good for your health. Fish have Omega-3s that can reduce your risk for heart disease and improve how the brain develops in unborn babies and children.

### What is the concern?

Some fish have high levels of mercury. Mercury can harm the brain, especially in unborn babies and children.