

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment



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New State Fish Advisory for Silverwood Lake: Choose Rainbow Trout Over Bass, Catfish, and Chub

Mercury and PCBs are the chemicals of potential concern

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SACRAMENTO – A new state sport fish advisory for San Bernardino County’s Silverwood Lake recommends eating rainbow trout and avoiding bass, bluegill, catfish, blackfish and tui chub from the reservoir.

The recommendations are based on the levels of methylmercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in different fish species in the lake. The advisory and eating guidelines were developed by the California Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) using data from sampling funded and conducted by the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board.

More than 100 fish were collected and analyzed for methylmercury and PCBs. Some fish species were also tested for pesticides, including chlordanes, DDTs, and dieldrin, but none of the pesticides were detected at levels high enough to cause health concerns.

“Eating fish provides many health benefits. These guidelines balance those benefits against the health risks from exposure to contaminants in fish,” said OEHHA Director Dr. George Alexeeff. “In addition to identifying fish species that have high levels of contaminants, they are designed to help individuals choose fish species that can be more safely prepared and eaten.”

Methylmercury can harm the brain and nervous system of people, especially unborn babies and children. PCBs affect many body functions, including effects on the nervous system, and have been found to cause cancer in animal studies.

The guidelines recommend that all fishers avoid eating any striped bass, blackfish, or tui chub from the lake. Women between the ages of 18 and 45 and children up to age 17 should also avoid eating any largemouth bass, bluegill or channel catfish. Men over 17 and women older than 45 can eat one serving per week of those species.

Rainbow trout from the lake have much lower levels of contaminants and can be safely eaten up to seven times per week by all groups. Tule perch consumption should be limited to one serving per week.

Development of the Silverwood Lake advisory was prompted by the statewide Lakes Survey conducted by the State Water Resources Control Board, which found high mercury and PCB levels in largemouth bass from the lake. That led the Lahontan regional board to secure funding to collect and test more bass and other fish species that people catch and consume from the lake.

“The Lahontan Water Board is pleased to have helped assess the safety of fish consumption at Silverwood Lake through the Water Board’s funding of fish collection and analysis,” said Chuck Curtis, Supervising Engineer at the Water Board. “While this fish consumption advisory will help keep people safe, keeping chemicals out of our surface waters is key to the long-term health of streams and lakes and the people who enjoy them.”

The Fish Advisory and Guidelines for Eating Fish from Silverwood Lake and a fact sheet – as well as advisories and eating guidelines for other fish species and other California bodies of water – are available at www.oehha.ca.gov/fish.html.

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.

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