Lower Willamette River Fish Advisory

Through public health assessments in 2002 and 2004, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) identified contaminated fish as the main way people can come into contact with contaminants in the Portland Harbor Superfund site. In 2004, OHA issued a fish advisory that included meal recommendations for fish caught in the Portland Harbor area. Since 2004, new data have been collected and an updated advisory with new meal recommendations has been released. The updated advisory applies to the area circled in orange on the map.

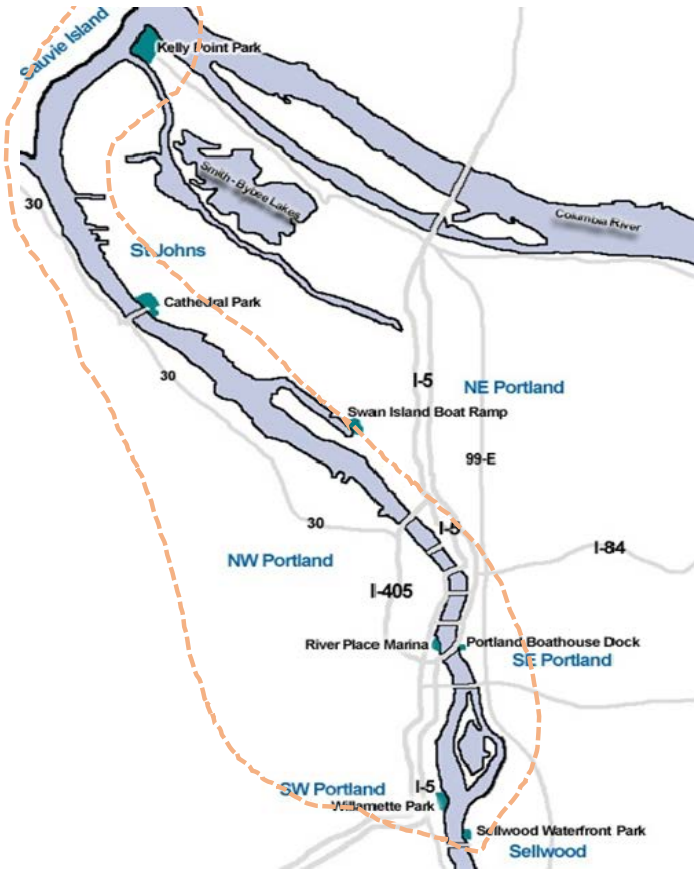


Figure 1. The fish advisory boundary covers a portion of the Lower Willamette River from the Sellwood Bridge to its confluence with the Columbia River. It also includes Multnomah Channel from its confluence with the Willamette River, to the Sauvie Island Bridge.

Oregon health officials recommend limiting the amount of resident fish species eaten from the Lower Willamette River. Resident fish stay within a defined territory on the river and do not migrate out to the ocean.

Recommended maximum meals*, per month, for resident fish:

Black Crappie (or 4 meals, if fillet only)

Carp

Brown Bullhead

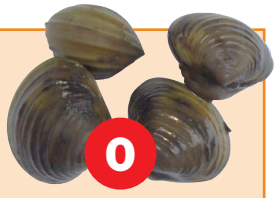
Bass

Recommended maximum meals*, per month, for shellfish:

Crayfish

Note: Harvesting freshwater clams and mussels in the Willamette River is ILLEGAL.

Mussels



Clams

**All recommended meals will be 0 (zero) when Superfund clean-up activities (for example, dredging) begin and soils are disturbed.*

Eat Fish.

Be Smart. Choose Wisely.

Fish and seafood are good for your heart and brain. They are low in fat, high in protein, and rich in nutrients and omega-3s.

HEALTHY CHOICE · EAT FISH. BE SMART.

Migratory fish, including salmon, steelhead, and shad are NOT included in this fish advisory. Migratory fish from the Willamette River are healthy choices.

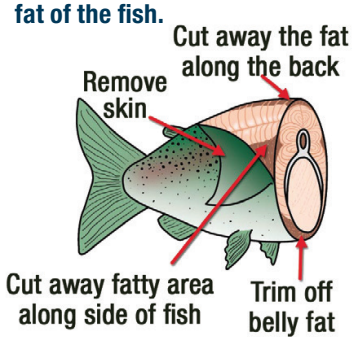
What is a meal?

A seafood serving or "meal" is about the size and thickness of your hand, or 1 oz. uncooked fish for every 20 lbs. of body weight.

160 lb. adult = 8 oz. / 80 lb. child = 4 oz.

Follow these cooking and cleaning tips to reduce your exposure to PCBs*:

- **Throw away the skin, fat and organs. PCBs collect in the fat of the fish.**
- **Bake or broil the fish so fats can drain off.**



***Mercury cannot be removed through cooking and cleaning.**

Contaminants of concern in fish from the Lower Willamette River

The contaminants of concern in fish from the Lower Willamette River are polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). PCBs are known to cause developmental problems in infants and children. Mercury has also been found in the fish. Other contaminants include dioxins and furans, persistent pesticides like DDT, and arsenic.

PCBs and mercury in fish from the lower Willamette River

Mercury and PCBs enter rivers, lakes, and streams through rain or snow and are also directly released from industrial or natural sources. Mercury and PCBs settle into sediment (mud in the river bed and banks) where small organisms feed and take up contaminants. When fish eat smaller organisms, contaminants build up in the fish's muscle (fillet) and fat. The bigger and older a fish is, the more likely it is to have eaten lots of smaller, contaminated organisms. People are exposed to mercury and PCBs when they eat contaminated fish.

For more information and to view the technical report, visit

www.healthoregon.org/fishadv

For other health information on PCBs or mercury:

www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq.html
www.epa.gov/mercury
https://www.epa.gov/pcbs

For information about the Portland Harbor Superfund clean-up site:

https://www.epa.gov/superfund/portland-harbor

PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION
Environmental Health Assessment Program

Oregon Health Authority

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