Safe Eating Guidelines in California

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Objectives for Today

- Provide background on OEHHA’s fish advisory program
- Highlight importance of monitoring data
- Review communication efforts & challenges
  - Gather feedback, ideas, monitoring partners
OEHHA and Fish Advisories

- OEHHA is responsible for evaluating risks from eating sport California fish and issuing advice to protect health
  - Fish may be contaminated by chemicals

- Non-regulatory – advisories provide recommendations and information

- Advisories/SEGs/Consumption Guidelines
  - All provide recommendations on how frequently people can eat fish from a water body
Why Have Fish Advisories

- Chemicals in fish with possible harmful health effects
  - Mercury and PCBs
- Long time frame to clean up
  - Legacy chemicals persist in environment
  - Responsibility of Water Board
- Eating fish offers health benefits
How OEHHA Develops Fish Advisories

- Based on results of testing fish samples for certain chemicals
- Need results from enough samples to represent species and water body
- *No state program to sample for advisories*
Where do data come from if there is no monitoring program?

- State Water Resources Control Board
  - Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program
- Regional Monitoring Program (San Francisco Bay)
- Department of Water Resources
- U.S. EPA
- U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)
How OEHHA Develops Advice

- OEHHA determines how much fish can be safely eaten using level of contamination and advisory tissue levels (ATLs)
- ATLs based on studies of health effects
  - Keep exposure at or below a safe exposure level
  - Balance risk and benefits
- Advice issued for each species in water body with adequate data
  - Advisories are based on a series of servings per week (0, 1, 2, 3 – 7)
OEHHA Advisories

- 53 water bodies plus advice for 5 anadromous species
  - Lakes: 33
  - Rivers & creeks: 13
  - Bays & coastline
    - San Francisco, Tomales, Santa Monica & San Pedro
  - Delta (3 segments)
  - Shad, Chinook salmon, steelhead, striped bass, sturgeon
Data for more Advisories?

- More than 9000 lakes:
  - OEHHA compiled data for 273 without advisories
    - 7 have adequate data to develop advice
    - Rest have data gaps: missing species or bad sample size
  - Locating and validating data is time consuming
    - Not centralized or complete
      - CEDEN – Good concept
        - Missing data, missing information, inconsistent
    - Different agencies hold data
      - Lake Oroville area – established good link with DWR
      - Upper Feather River – PG&E no link
    - Analytes, methods & QA/QC vary
More OEHHA Advisories!

- Just completed
  - Lake Oroville
  - Lake McClure
  - Lake McSwain
- In review
  - Statewide advice for lakes with no advisory
  - Pyramid Lake
- Future – more lakes, bays, and coastline
  - Balance of water bodies with lower contamination and those with higher contamination
Communication

- Fish filleting demonstration
- Presentations and trainings on advisories
Communicating Advice

- Balance health risks and benefits
- Emphasize importance of eating fish
- Advisory reports, fact sheets, single page pictorial advisories & kiosk versions
- Develop easy-to-read brochures
  - Learn safer and less safe options (fish species and water bodies)
  - Compare your consumption to recommendations
Web Communication

- [www.oehha.ca.gov](http://www.oehha.ca.gov) (Click on “Fish”)
- List of advisories with links
- Google map showing advisories
  - Direct link to advice
- How to Follow Advisories
- Information on chemicals
- Information for women and children
Tried to make documents and fact sheets simpler and easier to understand

- Pictorial advice

Conflict between simple wording and risk assessment language

- Completely safe does not exist in risk assessment
- “Safe” and “Safe Eating Guidelines” are not used in recent advisories

Feedback on wording and pictorial advice

- Informal comments
- Formal survey or focus group testing
Health benefits outweigh risks if you choose fish low in mercury.
Advisory Information

- [www.oehha.ca.gov](http://www.oehha.ca.gov) (Click on “Fish”)
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