

**HEALTH ADVISORY AND  
SAFE EATING GUIDELINES  
FOR FISH FROM COASTAL  
AREAS OF SOUTHERN  
CALIFORNIA:  
VENTURA HARBOR TO  
SAN MATEO POINT**

**June 2009**

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**Health Advisory  
and  
Safe Eating Guidelines  
for Fish from  
Coastal Areas of Southern California:  
Ventura Harbor to San Mateo Point**

**June 2009**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A total of 1,373 fish from 22 species or species groups were collected along the coastal waters of southern California from Ventura Harbor in Ventura County to San Mateo Point in Orange County. Fish were analyzed for one or more of the contaminants PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls), DDTs (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane and its metabolites), chlordane, dieldrin, and mercury. The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) evaluated the contaminant data to determine whether harmful health effects might occur if certain sport fish from these areas were eaten regularly.

Based on this evaluation, OEHHA developed a health advisory and safe eating guidelines for fish from this area. The advisory warns fishers against eating specific species from some or all locations. The safe eating guidelines identify fish species with low contaminant levels that are safe to eat frequently (once a week or more). Evaluating contaminants that may be found in fish is OEHHA's primary concern, but OEHHA also wants its advisories to reflect the general scientific agreement that eating fish appears to promote significant health benefits, including decreased mortality. These potential benefits are thought to occur because of unique omega-3 fatty acids found in fish. The benefits include decreased rates of cardiovascular disease and stroke, decreased inflammation, and improvements in brain and visual function. Fish consumption during pregnancy has been associated with higher cognitive scores in young children. The health advisory and safe eating guidelines give consumers information to make healthy choices in fish consumption.

Sufficient numbers of fish were collected to provide consumption advice for barracuda, barred sand bass, black croaker, corbina, California halibut, California scorpionfish (also known as "sculpin"), jacksmelt, kelp bass, opaleye, Pacific chub mackerel, queenfish, rockfishes, sardines, sargo, shovelnose guitarfish, surfperches, topsmelt, white croaker (also known as "tomcod" and "kingfish"), and yellowfin croaker. Because sport fish were collected from such a large geographic area, OEHHA divided the advisory and safe eating guidelines into regions based on highly variable contaminant levels found in some species: 1) Ventura Harbor to Santa Monica Pier, 2) Santa Monica Beach south of Santa Monica Pier to Seal Beach Pier, and 3) South of Seal Beach Pier to San Mateo Point. Contaminant levels were very similar in the first (northern) and third (southern) regions and, thus, the consumption advice provided for these two areas is identical. See the following map and tables for fish consumption advice for each of the regions. For fish species and regions where the potential health effects resulting from exposure to PCBs were low relative to those from mercury, the consumption advice for women 18-45 years and children 1-17 years is more restrictive than for women over 45 years and men. This is because the fetus and children are more sensitive to the toxic effects of the form of mercury found in fish (methylmercury).

This study also found that PCB levels in some fish caught in this area were far higher in skin-on fillets than in fillets where the skin had been removed. Consumption advice is based on contaminant levels in skin-off fillets. OEHHA strongly advises fishers only to eat the safest part of the fish, skin-off fillets.

This effort revises a previous state advisory for the area using new data and improved analytical methods. Of the above species, sardines, sargo, shovelnose guitarfish, topsmelt, and yellowfin croaker were not included in the previous advisory.

For general advice on how to limit your exposure to chemical contaminants in sport fish (e.g., eating smaller fish of legal size), and to see a factsheet on methylmercury and PCBs in sport fish, see the California Sport Fish Consumption Advisories (<http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish.html>).




















Guidelines for other California water bodies can be found online at:

[http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish/so\\_cal/index.html](http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish/so_cal/index.html).

Unlike the case for DDTs and PCBs, various cooking and cleaning techniques will not reduce the methylmercury content of fish. Additionally, there are no known ways to prepare fish (such as soaking in milk) that will reduce the methylmercury content of the fish.

# A guide to eating fish caught from Ventura Harbor to San Mateo Point

Women 18 - 45, especially those who are pregnant or breastfeeding, and children 1 - 17




















|  | Yellow Zone<br>(see map)              | Red Zone<br>(see map)                 |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <br>Jacksmelt                             | Safe to eat<br>4 servings<br>per week | Safe to eat<br>4 servings<br>per week |
| OR   |                                       | OR                                    |
| <br>Pacific chub mackerel                 | 2 servings<br>per week                | 2 servings<br>per week                |
| <br>Corbina                               |                                       |                                       |
| <br>Yellowfin croaker                     | OR                                    | OR                                    |
| <br>Queenfish                             | 1 serving<br>per week                 | 1 serving<br>per week                 |
| <br>Surfperches                          |                                       |                                       |
| <br>Opaleye                             | OR                                    | OR                                    |
| <br>California halibut                    | 1 serving<br>per week                 | 1 serving<br>per week                 |
| <br>Sargo                                 |                                       |                                       |
| <br>California scorpionfish (Sculpin)     | OR                                    | OR                                    |
| <br>Rockfishes                            | 2 servings<br>per week                | DO NOT EAT                            |
| <br>Sardines                              |                                       |                                       |
| <br>Shovelnose guitarfish                | OR                                    | OR                                    |
| <br>Kelp bass (Calico bass)              | 1 serving<br>per week                 | DO NOT EAT                            |
| <br>Topsmelt                              |                                       |                                       |
| <br>Barred sand bass                      | OR                                    | OR                                    |
| <br>White croaker<br>(Kingfish or Tomcod) | 1 serving<br>per week                 | DO NOT EAT                            |
| <br>Barracuda                           |                                       |                                       |
| <br>Black croaker                       | DO NOT EAT                            | DO NOT EAT                            |

**For example:** If you eat 1 serving of Kelp bass, do not eat any more fish until the next week.

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment  
[www.oehha.ca.gov/fish.html](http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish.html)

# A guide to eating fish caught from Ventura Harbor to San Mateo Point

Women over 45 years and men over 17 years

|   | Yellow Zone<br>(see map)              | Red Zone<br>(see map)                 |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <br>Jacksmelt                              | Safe to eat<br>7 servings<br>per week | Safe to eat<br>7 servings<br>per week |
| <br>Pacific chub mackerel                  | 4 servings<br>per week                | 4 servings<br>per week                |
| <br>Queenfish                              | 2 servings<br>per week                | 2 servings<br>per week                |
| <br>Opaleye                                |                                       |                                       |
| <br>Rockfishes                            |                                       |                                       |
| <br>Surfperches                            |                                       |                                       |
| <br>California halibut                     |                                       |                                       |
| <br>Corbina                                |                                       |                                       |
| <br>Yellowfin croaker                      | OR                                    | OR                                    |
| <br>Shovelnose guitarfish                 | 1 serving<br>per week                 | 1 serving<br>per week                 |
| <br>Sardines                               |                                       |                                       |
| <br>Black croaker                          |                                       |                                       |
| <br>Sargo                                  |                                       |                                       |
| <br>Barracuda                              | OR                                    | OR                                    |
| <br>California scorpionfish (Sculpin)      |                                       |                                       |
| <br>Kelp bass (Calico bass)               | 2 servings<br>per week                | DO NOT EAT                            |
| <br>Barred sand bass                      |                                       |                                       |
| <br>Topsmelt                              |                                       |                                       |
| <br>White croaker<br>(Kingfish or Tomcod) |                                       |                                       |

**For example:** If you eat 1 serving of Kelp bass, do not eat any more fish until the next week.

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# Health Advisory and Safe Eating Guideline Regions

