



## **INFORMATION ABOUT EATING FISH FROM GENE WASH RESERVOIR (SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY)**

Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)

California Environmental Protection Agency

June 2024

### **Why did OEHHA develop an advisory for eating fish from Gene Wash Reservoir?**

OEHHA developed an advisory for Gene Wash Reservoir because of mercury and selenium found in the fish caught from this water body. Gene Wash Reservoir is located near the California-Arizona border, in San Bernardino County. This advisory is part of an ongoing effort by OEHHA to provide safe-eating advice for fish from different California water bodies.

### **Why should I eat fish?**

- Low-contaminant fish are an important part of a healthy, well-balanced diet. The American Heart Association recommends eating at least two servings of fish each week.
- Fish are a good source of protein and vitamins, and are a primary dietary source of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Eating low-contaminant fish while pregnant may be beneficial to the baby's brain development.

### **Which contaminant(s) are of concern for people eating these fish from Gene Wash Reservoir?**

- Mercury
  - Mercury is a metal that comes from mining, air fallout from burning coal and other fuels, and from natural sources. It is the most commonly found contaminant of concern in fish.
  - Too much methylmercury, the form of mercury found in fish, can harm the brain, especially in fetuses, babies, and children. Methylmercury can pass from mothers to their babies during pregnancy.
  - Because fetuses, babies, and children are especially sensitive to mercury, OEHHA has one set of advice for how much mercury-containing fish women age 18–49 years and children should eat, and another set of advice for women 50 years and older and men 18 years and older.
- Selenium
  - Selenium is an element that comes from natural sources and is an essential nutrient.
  - High levels of selenium can cause health problems including hair loss, gastrointestinal distress, dizziness, and tremors.

## How did OEHHA determine the consumption guidelines for eating these fish species from Gene Wash Reservoir?

- OEHHA compared contaminant levels in fish caught from Gene Wash Reservoir to levels that are considered safe for human consumption.
- OEHHA's consumption guidelines balance the health benefits of fish consumption and the risks from the contaminants.

## What does OEHHA recommend for people who want to eat these fish species from Gene Wash Reservoir?

- OEHHA recommends the types and amounts of fish that may be eaten each week as "servings." A serving is about the size and thickness of your hand for fish fillets. Give children smaller servings. For smaller fish species, several individual fish may be required to yield a serving.
- Women 18–49 years and children 1–17 years
  - May eat:
    - 1 total serving per week of Flathead Catfish, or
    - 2 total servings per week of black bass species, or
    - 3 total servings per week of Common Carp or sunfish species.
- Women 50 years and older and men 18 years and older
  - May eat:
    - 3 total servings per week of Common Carp, Flathead Catfish, or sunfish species, or
    - 4 total servings per week of black bass species.
- For additional fish species found in Gene Wash Reservoir and not included in this advisory, OEHHA recommends following the [statewide advisory for eating fish from California's lakes and reservoirs without site-specific advice](#).

## How long is the advisory in effect?

This advisory is effective starting June 2024 and does not expire. Chemical contaminant levels in fish do not change much over time; the advisory remains in effect until an update is issued.

## What else can I do to protect my health and the health of my family?

- Eat a variety of fish.
- Eat smaller (younger) fish of legal size.
- Eat only the skinless fillet or meat portion of fish.
- Thoroughly cook the fish and allow the juice to drain away.

- Learn about OEHHA's guidelines for eating sport fish in California:
  - Visit <https://oehha.ca.gov/fish/advisories>, or call OEHHA at (916) 324-7572 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>.



**Women**  
(18 – 49 Years)

**Children**  
(1 – 17 Years)



**Women**  
(50+ Years)

**Men**  
(18+ Years)

**3** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

OR

**2** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

OR

**1** TOTAL  
SERVING  
A WEEK

**3** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

OR

**4** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

OR

**3** TOTAL  
SERVINGS  
A WEEK

**Serving Size**

A serving of fish is about the size and thickness of your hand. Give children smaller servings.

For Adults



For Children



# A GUIDE TO EATING FISH *from* GENE WASH RESERVOIR

(SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY)

**Eat the Good Fish**

Eating fish that are low in chemicals may provide health benefits to children and adults.



**Avoid the Bad Fish**

Eating fish with higher levels of chemicals like mercury or PCBs may cause health problems in children and adults.



**Choose the Right Fish**

Chemicals may be more harmful to unborn babies and children.



Common Carp



Sunfish Species



Black Bass Species

♥ high in omega-3s



Flathead Catfish



California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment

web [www.oehha.ca.gov/fish](http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish)  
email [fish@oehha.ca.gov](mailto:fish@oehha.ca.gov)  
phone (916) 324-7572

Eat only the skinless fillet



Eat only the meat



Some chemicals are higher in the skin, fat, and guts.