

## Walla Walla River Fish Consumption Advisory

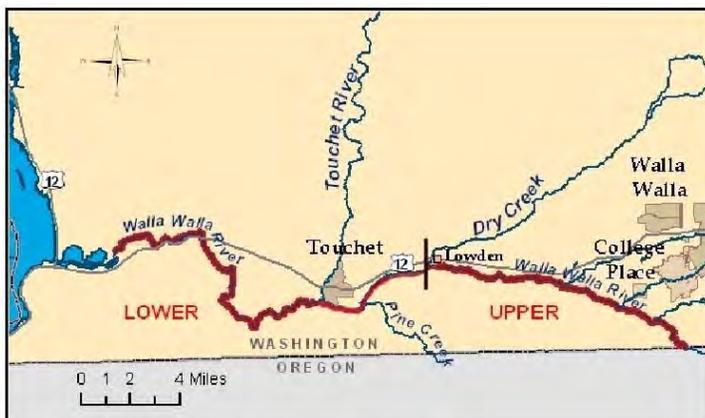
### *Why is there a fish consumption advisory for the Walla Walla River?*

In 2004, the Department of Ecology (Ecology) completed a water quality study for the Walla Walla River. This study looked at pesticides and PCB levels in bridgeline suckers, carp, catfish, northern pikeminnow, and smallmouth bass. Results from this study show high levels of PCBs in carp and northern pikeminnow, [www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0403032.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0403032.html). The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) evaluated these results and has issued a fish consumption advisory for the Walla Walla River.

DOH recommends that the general public, especially women who might become pregnant or are pregnant, nursing mothers, and young children limit their consumption of carp (from the lower part of the river) to one meal per month and northern pikeminnow (from the upper part of the river) to one meal per month due to PCBs.

### *Where is the Walla Walla River?*

The Walla Walla River is located in Walla Walla County in south central Washington. The river extends 61 river miles from the headwaters of its north fork in Oregon to its confluence with the Columbia River in Washington. The public uses the river for fishing and boating. The red area on the map are the lower and upper part of the Walla Walla River which are affected by this fish consumption advisory.



### *Which fish can I eat from the Walla Walla River?*

You can still catch and eat fish from the Walla Walla River where fishing is allowed. To reduce your exposure to contaminants, follow the advice below about fish to limit and fish to enjoy.

#### **Fish to Limit**

##### **Carp**

##### **Lower Walla Walla River**

(from Dry Creek downstream to the mouth of the Columbia River):

Carp should be limited to one meal per month due to PCBs.



##### **Northern Pikeminnow**

##### **Upper Walla Walla River**

(from Dry Creek upstream to the Oregon border):

Northern pikeminnow should be limited to one meal per month due to PCBs.



##### **Largemouth & Smallmouth Bass:**

##### **Statewide Mercury Advisory**

Women who might become

pregnant or are pregnant,

nursing mothers, and young

children should limit bass to two meals per month.



#### **Fish With No Limits - Enjoy!**

These fish are good choices because they are low in contaminants.

**Lower Walla Walla River:** Enjoy catfish, northern pikeminnow, and bridgeline sucker.

**Upper Walla Walla River:** Enjoy carp and bridgeline sucker.

**Store-bought Fish:** Some good choices are canned light tuna, cod, flounder, salmon, and trout.

## ***How do PCBs get into fish?***

PCBs are chlorinated chemical compounds that were once used in a variety of products such as coolants and lubricants in transformers, capacitors, electrical equipment, old fluorescent light fixtures, and hydraulic oils. PCBs can have localized sources or can be transported globally through the atmosphere. In 1977, commercial production of PCBs was stopped due to their toxicity and persistence in the environment. In water, PCBs stick to organic particles and bottom sediments and are taken up by small organisms and fish. PCBs also bind strongly to soil.

## ***How does mercury get into fish?***

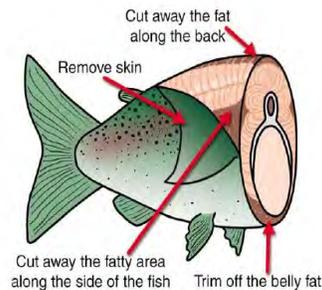
Mercury levels found in water bodies are due to natural and human activities. Products containing mercury that are improperly disposed of can contaminate soil, sediments, water, and air. Once in water, mercury can be transformed into methylmercury by bacteria. Methylmercury accumulates in the environment, moves up the food chain from the smallest life forms, into predatory fish, and then into humans who eat fish.

## ***How can I reduce my exposure to PCBs and other contaminants?***

**Choose fish low in contaminants and prepare fish properly** to reduce your exposure to contaminants, while continuing to gain the health benefits in fish.

By preparing fish the following way, you can reduce your exposure to PCBs and other contaminants that collect in the fatty parts of fish by up to 50 percent:

- ✓ Remove the fat before cooking. Do not eat the skin.
- ✓ Grill, broil or bake the fish.
- ✓ Let all the fat drip off during cooking.
- ✓ Do not use the fat for gravies or sauces.
- ✓ **Mercury is stored in the fillet of the fish and will not be reduced by preparing fish this way.**



**To reduce your exposure even more:**

- ✓ Eat a variety of fish.
- ✓ Remember to consume younger, smaller fish.
- ✓ If you eat more than the recommended amount of fish in a month, eat less the next month.

## ***How does PCBs/Mercury affect health?***

**PCBs** — Children exposed in the womb to high levels of PCBs may have slight but measurable impairments in physical growth and learning behavior. Some PCBs behave similarly to dioxins and EPA has therefore classified them as probable human carcinogens.

**Mercury** — The primary concern is the developmental effects on the unborn fetus or young child. Mercury has been linked to adverse effects on the nervous system that may result in learning deficits or learning difficulties later in life.

## ***Should I keep eating fish?***

**Yes! Fish is healthy heart and brain food for you and your children.** The American Heart Association recommends eating two meals with fish per week. For information about fish choices that are low in contaminants visit [www.doh.wa.gov/fish](http://www.doh.wa.gov/fish).

- Fish is an excellent low fat food, a great source of protein, vitamins, and minerals.
- Fish is an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids which are not found naturally in our bodies.
- Omega-3 fatty acids are essential during pregnancy for the healthy development of your child's brain, retina, and nerve tissue.
- Omega-3 fatty acids help prevent heart disease by reducing blood pressure, inflammation, and blood clotting, which can prevent stroke.

## **More Information**

### **Fish Advisories in Washington State**

Department of Health

1-877-485-7316

[www.doh.wa.gov/fish](http://www.doh.wa.gov/fish)

### **Walla Walla River Water Quality**

Department of Ecology

360-407-6000

[www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/tmdl](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/tmdl)

For people with disabilities, this document is available in other formats upon request.

To submit a request, please call 1-800-525-0127 (TDD/TTY call 711).