



# Media Release

**For Immediate Release**  
May 23, 2013

Tim Moran  
Office of Public Information  
(916) 327-8239

## Statewide Survey Maps Sport Fish Contamination in California Rivers and Streams

**Sacramento** – Concentrations of contaminants such as methylmercury and pesticides in sport fish were found to be low at the majority of locations sampled in the first-ever systematic statewide survey of California rivers and streams.

Fish high in the food chain in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta region, however, such as largemouth, smallmouth and striped bass, and Sacramento pikeminnow, showed a high accumulation of methylmercury.

Methylmercury can affect the developing nervous system of children and adolescents, potentially leading to learning disabilities. Methylmercury contamination of California rivers and streams likely originates from multiple sources, including historic mercury, gold and silver mining; global emissions to the atmosphere; and urban and industrial wastewater and storm water.

Methylmercury is generally a low concern in high elevation locations where trout species predominate and where most of the fishing spots sampled were located.

Other pollutants, including dieldrin, PCBs, DDT, chlordanes and selenium were also analyzed, but were not found at high enough concentrations to be a problem.

The fish survey, conducted by the State Water Resources Control Board's Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP), surveyed sport fish from 63 locations in 2011.

The survey analyzed sport fish because they provide information on potential human exposure to contaminants, and on the condition of the aquatic food web.

The initial screening study is a first step in an effort to identify and quantify contaminants in California's rivers and streams to provide a detailed evaluation of human and wildlife exposure, and to establish priorities for cleanup actions.



In this survey, 568 fish representing 16 species were collected from 63 popular river and stream fishing locations throughout California. Where possible, multiple species were analyzed at each location.

Trout species and salmon had low concentrations of methylmercury and other contaminants. Cleaner species were frequently present alongside the species with high concentrations at the contaminated locations.

The River and Stream Survey was funded by the State Water Resources Control Board's Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

The Survey is one component of a new program to track sport fish contamination in all California water bodies. Results from a survey of the state's lakes were reported three years ago, and results for the coast were published last year.

The public can access results for individual fishing locations including the Coast Survey and the Lakes Survey through the California Water Quality Monitoring Council's "My Water Quality" web portal at: [www.CaWaterQuality.net](http://www.CaWaterQuality.net)

Information on sport fish contamination can be accessed by clicking on "Is It Safe to Eat Fish and Shellfish from Our Waters?"

The River and Stream Survey Report is available on the SWAMP website at: [http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/swamp/rivers\\_study.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/swamp/rivers_study.shtml)

The State Water Resources Control Board's mission is to preserve, enhance, and restore the quality of California's water resources, and ensure their proper allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations.

***The State Water Boards are now on Twitter!***  
Follow us at: <https://twitter.com/h2boardsnews>