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OHA revises March 10 health advisory for sturgeon in lower Columbia River

Agency recommends limited meals due to levels of PCBs and mercury in sturgeon tissue

PORTLAND, Ore.—Oregon Health Authority is revising recommendations on the amount of sturgeon from the lower Columbia River that people should eat.

OHA is revising these recommendations due to the discovery of a data transcription error in the final calculation. The previous recommendation, based on PCBs only, was 7 meals per month for pregnant women, nursing mothers and children, and 8 meals per month for men as well as women beyond childbearing age. More protective meal recommendations are needed, according to public health officials.

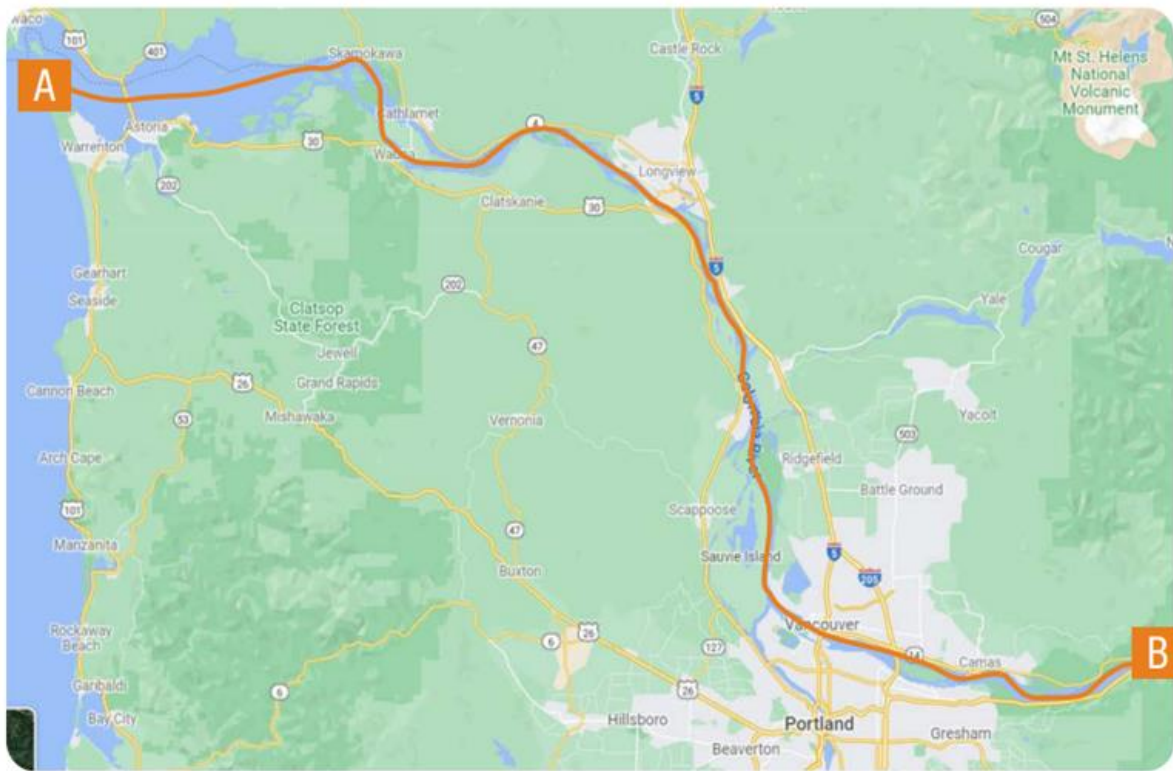
OHA issues advisories when fish or shellfish tissue data show that the levels of contaminants—in this case, PCBs and mercury—are above levels that could harm health. OHA calculates meal recommendations using these data to help people better understand the number of fish meals they can safely eat in one month. These meal recommendations are found in Table 1.

Table 1: Meal recommendations for sturgeon in the lower Columbia River

River zone	Meals per month recommended consumption rates*	Affected populations
Lower Columbia River: See boundary below	4	Pregnant women, nursing mothers, and children
	6	Men, women beyond childbearing age

* A meal is about the size and thickness of your or your child's hand or one ounce of uncooked fish for every 20 pounds of body weight.

The advisory boundary for the lower Columbia River extends from the mouth of the Columbia (A) upriver to Bonneville Dam (B).



Although sturgeon are considered a migratory fish, their meat is high in fat where PCBs and mercury accumulate. In addition, sturgeon are long-lived and suck up food from the sediment where PCBs and mercury collect. The

longer a fish lives, the more PCBs and mercury they accumulate in their tissue.

Eating too many fish contaminated with PCBs and mercury can cause negative health effects over time. These health effects include damage to organs, the nervous system and the brain, leading to potential learning and behavior problems. Mothers can pass these contaminants to their babies during pregnancy or in breastmilk. Fetuses, babies and small children are most vulnerable to the health effects of PCBs and mercury.

While it is important for people to know about contaminants in sturgeon, it is equally important to continue to eat at least two meals of a variety of fish from a variety of sources each week to gain important health benefits. Fish are high in protein, low in fat and a rich source of nutrients like omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3s provide protection from heart disease and are an important brain food for adults, children and fetuses.

As future data becomes available for sturgeon from the lower Columbia River, OHA will evaluate and update the advisory meal allowances as needed.

When fishing in the lower Columbia River, OHA advises fishers to visit the [OHA fish advisory webpage](#) at HealthOregon.org/fishadv for a list of other areas and water bodies with existing fish advisories and recommended meal allowances.

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