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A Survey of Anglers to Assess Fish Consumption from San Diego Bay

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Abstract

Nationwide concern by public health agencies and the public that fish caught and consumed by recreational anglers may contain chemical contaminants that pose risks to human health. San Diego Bay is the third largest protected natural bay and one of the five largest ports in California. It is a major receiving water body for the San Diego Bay Watershed with over one million residents. The potential for contamination exists from many sources including numerous urban and industrial discharges. In 2013, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) with the California Environmental Protection Agency released Health Advisory and Guidelines for Eating Fish from San Diego Bay; however, little is known about the actual consumption patterns of anglers in the bay. The last study was completed by the Environmental Health Coalition in 2005 and limited to pier anglers. We conducted a year-long consumption survey of pier, shoreline and boating anglers in and around the Bay. Our goal is to improve understanding of the types and amount of fish caught and consumed and associated risk to human health. Preliminary results indicate many anglers come from lower-income neighborhoods and identify primarily as Caucasian and Latino. More than half of those surveyed fish once a week or more. However, the majority (90%) of anglers do not eat the fish they catch. The findings from this study will provide valuable information to public health agencies regarding actual consumption rates for San Diego Bay to better informing decision-making and policy appropriate to the local context.