Indiana State Department of Health

THE INDIANA FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORY

What is the Fish Consumption Advisory?

The Indiana Fish Consumption Advisory (FCA) is an online resource containing useful information and advice on the consumption of fish, both those caught from a local waterbody, and those which have been purchased. This advisory is compiled with the collaboration of three (3) state agencies: the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM), the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR). We are also supported by efforts from Purdue University, through their Food and Nutrition Department. We have prepared this factsheet to support fishermen and their families, and those who like to eat fish by providing helpful information to make healthy choices.

Why was it created?

While sampling the environment (soil, water) decades ago, scientists discovered contamination in many forms, like mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a man-made organic chemical that at one time was widely used in industries needing a substance that was heat and fire resistant. PCBs and mercury, along with other organic compounds and metals, were later found to be present in fish. The need to inform the public about these findings and provide information about eating certain fish became a priority for Indiana and the entire United States.

The Indiana Fish Consumption Advisory initially began in the form of press releases in the 1970's, when advice was given on eating or not eating certain fish that had been caught from Lake Michigan. These releases were published in DNR's Fishing Guide. Eventually the press releases expanded to other local waterbodies, such as Monroe Reservoir, White River and the Ohio River. As sampling of local waters expanded and more data was accumulated on a great number of Indiana waters, development of a complete summary of these findings was undertaken.

Guidance for fish consumption was aimed at those who fished for recreation or sport in Indiana. This advice ranged from eating fish once per week to NO consumption for certain fish from certain waters. After years of fish tissue analysis over many areas of the state, places where fish could be eaten with unlimited consumption have also been added to the advisory as a sign of progression and growth of the advisory and sampling locations.

Consumption advice is divided into two groups:

1. The general population, includes males over the age of 18 and females over 50, or females who are no longer capable of becoming pregnant.

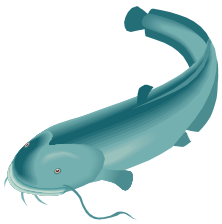
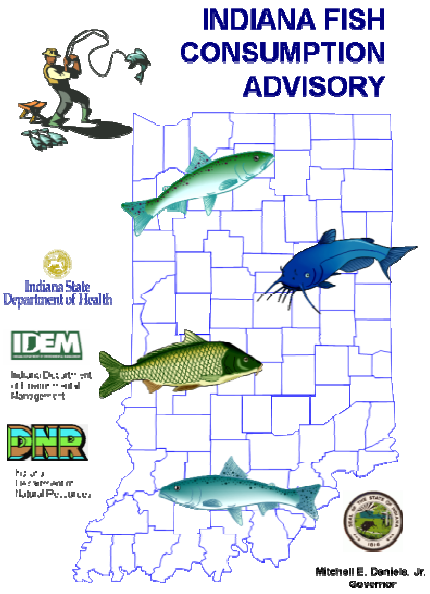
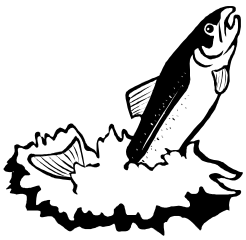
2. The sensitive population, includes females under 50 and males below the age of 18.

This division was felt to be necessary so that Indiana could be more protective of a fetus in pregnant women and nursing mothers and for possible delays in mental and physical development in younger children.

How is the Advisory set up?

The Indiana FCA, found on the State Department of Health's website, contains many items of interest. They include general information about the advisory, statewide recommendations, advisory groupings, risk and benefit explanations, and, an extensive listing of state-wide waterbodies (streams, rivers, lakes, and reservoirs) along with oother resources related to fish consumption in Indiana.

Where do I get information about the Advisory and other related resources?

Indiana State Department of Health website: http://www.in.gov/isdh/23650.htm

Purdue University website - includes iPhone Application ('fish4health'), a wallet card with consumption advice, and other fish consumption information in other languages: www.fish4health.net