

UNDERSTANDING THE SPOKANE RIVER

A guide to safer fishing and recreation

A place to play, fish and get out on the water, the Spokane River is a wonderful resource for the communities along its shores. However, past industrial activities, locally and upstream, contributed to contamination of the river and its fish and beaches, mainly in the form of PCBs and metals.

While cleanup efforts have reduced contamination, it's still important to take precautions when fishing or enjoying the river's beaches.

HEAVY METALS & RIVER BEACHES

What are heavy metals?

Potentially toxic minerals including arsenic, cadmium and lead.

Where do the heavy metals affecting the Spokane River come from and how do they get into the river?

During the last century, mining in the Coeur d'Alene Basin released heavy metal contamination in downstream bodies of water, including Lake Coeur d'Alene and the Spokane River.

Where are the heavy metals deposited?

While much of the heavy metal contamination settles at the bottom of Lake Coeur d'Alene, the finer contaminated sediments enter the Spokane River during high water runoff events. Heavy metals can settle on the river bottom, flow downstream, or be deposited on shorelines. During conditions when waters are high, heavy metals can be deposited at the high-water mark well above the river's summer shoreline water level.

Are our beaches safe?

The Washington Department of Ecology has cleaned up several beaches along the Spokane River (see map for locations) and it's safe for the public to enjoy them. However, it's still important to take precautions when using beaches upstream of Upriver Dam.

What can I do?

To protect yourself and especially your children from heavy metal exposure, consider using a blanket to sit or play on. Before eating or when leaving the beach, wash hands, feet and faces; wipe down any chairs, coolers or children's toys; and towel or brush off pets.

Fish wisely, cook safely

Fish consumption advisories explain how to safely choose and eat fish from bodies of water where contaminants have been found. Historically, PCBs, PBDEs and metals have been detected in Spokane River fish. By limiting your catch and using safe cooking methods, it's possible to safely enjoy local, fresh fish. See the advisory below and remember: fish wisely, cook safely.

FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORY

Lake Roosevelt to Little Falls Dam

Largescale sucker: 1 meal per month
Brown trout: 4 meals per month
Rainbow trout: 4 meals per month

Little Falls Pool

Largescale sucker: 4 meals per month
Northern pikeminnow: 4 meals per month

Lake Spokane

Largescale sucker: 1 meal per month
Brown trout: 1 meal per month
Mountain whitefish: 2 meals per month
Northern pikeminnow: 2 meals per month
Rainbow trout: 4 meals per month
Yellow perch: 8 meals per month
Carp: do not eat

Nine Mile Dam to Upriver Dam

Mountain whitefish: 1 meal per month
Largescale sucker: 2 meals per month
Rainbow trout: 2 meals per month

Little Spokane River

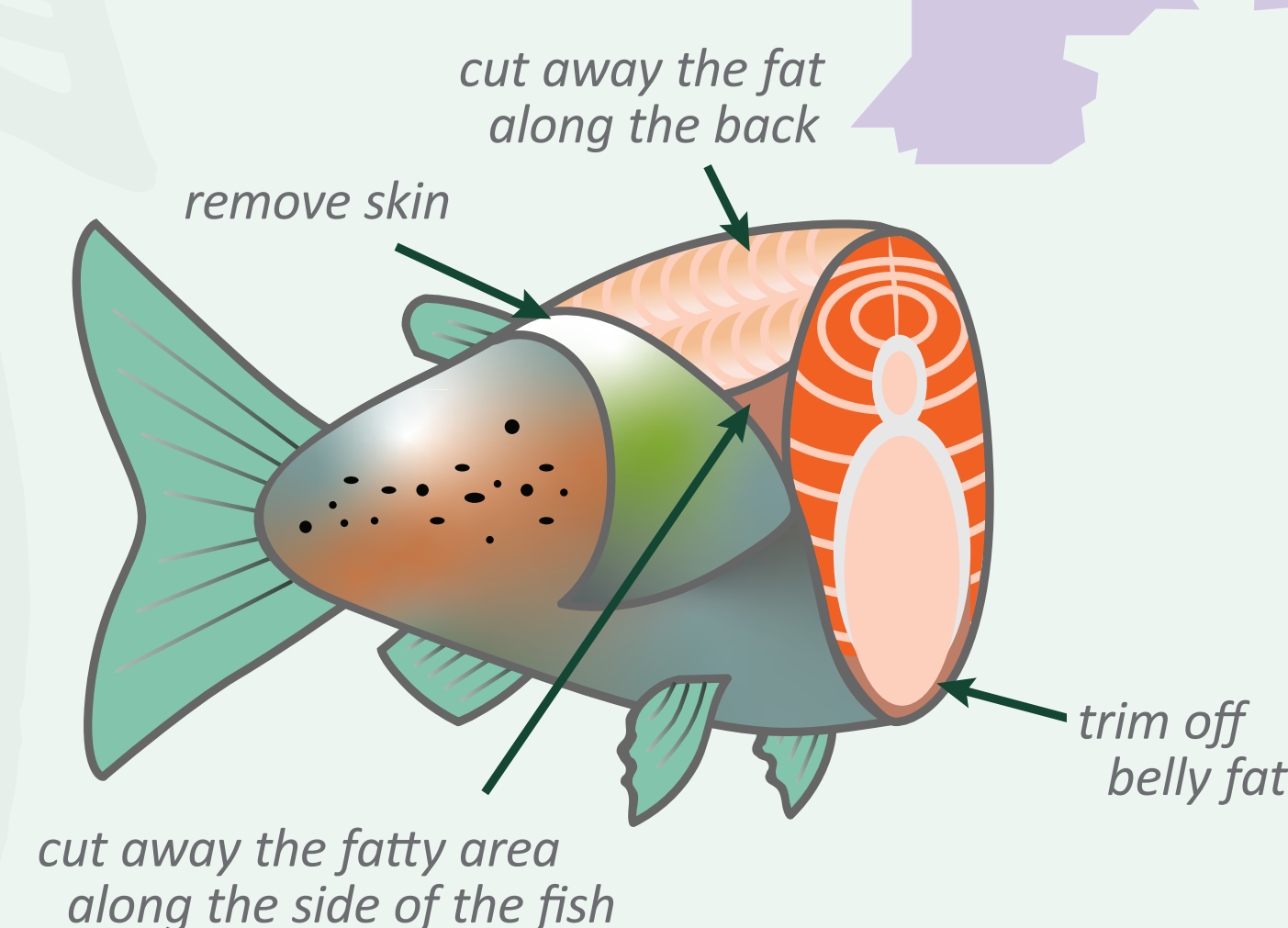
Mountain whitefish: 4 meals per month
Northern pikeminnow: 4 meals per month
Rainbow trout: unrestricted

Upriver Dam to Idaho Border

Catch and release only

STATEWIDE MERCURY ADVISORY

Women who are or plan to become pregnant, nursing mothers, and young children should not eat northern pikeminnow and limit largemouth and smallmouth bass to two meals per month.



TIPS FOR COOKING FISH SAFELY

Prepare fish the following way to reduce PCBs and other contaminants* that collect in the fatty parts of the fish by up to 50 percent:

- Remove the head, skin, fat and internal organs before cooking. Do not use for sauce or gravy.
- Grill, bake or broil fish so the fat drips off while cooking.

**Preparing fish this way does not reduce mercury content.*

HEALTH BENEFITS OF FISH

Fish is a healthy addition to your diet, providing low-fat, high-quality protein, omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins and minerals. While eating fish can benefit your health, it has some risks.

Fish can take in contaminants from the food they eat and water they live in. Over time, chemicals like PCBs and mercury can build up in their bodies.

By choosing the right fish and using safe cooking methods, you can get the nutritional benefits of fish while protecting your health. Choose fish low in mercury and other contaminants—like trout and perch. Remember: fish wisely, cook safely.

