PCB Forum at Marist College

January 16, 2013
Hudson River Fish Advisory Outreach Project

- What is a “fish advisory”?
- What is the health advice about eating Hudson River fish and crabs
- How the New York State Department of Health lets people know the health advice
Hudson River Fish Advisory Outreach

A fish advisory is health advice about eating fish you catch, because of chemicals in the fish

- Thousands of New York waterbodies, about 150 with specific advice
- Chemicals from industrial contamination and airborne deposition (mercury)

The primary contaminants in NY fish are PCBs and mercury
Eating Fish You Catch in NYS

- Fish has high quality protein, essential nutrients, healthy fish oils and low saturated fat – and tastes good
- For water bodies that don’t have stricter advice, can eat up to one fish meal a week
- DOH advice included in DEC regulation booklet
Why Is Eating Hudson River Fish a Concern?

Hudson River fish have PCBs

Communicating health problems associated with eating fish with PCBs

- No immediate health effects from PCBs
- Can’t taste or smell PCBs in fish
- Because PCBs accumulate in fat, fish can have up to thousands of times the amount of PCBs in water
- Persistent in the environment and the body
Advice on eating fish you catch depends upon

- who you are
- where you fish
- what you catch
Hudson River: Who You Are

• Women under 50 (childbearing years) and children under 15 should not eat fish or crabs from most of the Hudson River (Corinth Dam to NYC Battery)
  – Women who eat highly contaminated fish may have an increased risk of having babies who are slower to develop and learn
• For men over 15 and women over 50, advice depends on where you fish
Hudson River: Where You Fish

Upper Hudson
From the Rt. 9 Bridge to Troy Dam
Do not eat fish from the Route 9 Bridge to the Troy Dam.

From Baker’s Falls to the Troy Dam, New York’s State Department of Environmental Conservation’s “catch and release” regulations apply.

Take No Fish. Eat No Fish.

Mid Hudson
From Troy Dam to Bridge at Catskill
Eat up to one meal a month:
- Alewife
- Rock bass
- Blueback herring
- Yellow perch

Do not eat other fish from the Mid Hudson including striped bass.
Hudson River: Where You Fish

Striped bass are an extremely popular fish

• In spring, they migrate from the ocean into the Hudson to spawn

In 2008, a workgroup of agency staff from the Atlantic Coast states evaluated PCB levels and advisories for striped bass and bluefish
Hudson River: Where You Fish

Average PCBs Levels in Striped Bass

Shaded area is the Hudson
- NYC to Poughkeepsie
- Troy in spring
- Troy in fall

From the 2008 Report of the Atlantic Coast Interstate Workgroup on Recreationally-Caught Striped Bass and Bluefish
Hudson River: What You Catch
(Men over 15 and Women over 50)

Don’t eat:
- White catfish
- Channel catfish
- American eel*
- Gizzard shad

Eat up to one meal a month:
- Striped bass
- White perch
- Carp
- Walleye
- Bluefish
- Brown bullhead
- Smallmouth bass
- Largemouth bass
- Rainbow smelt
- Goldfish
- Atlantic needlefish

Eat up to six crabs a week:
- Blue crab
  Do not eat the tomalley (green stuff, mustard) or reuse cooking water

Eat up to four meals a month:
- All other species

*DEC regulations prohibit taking American eel for food from the Hudson River
Crabs

• Eating crabs is very popular
• No license needed
• Remove the “green stuff” in crabs
  – Green stuff acts like a liver and chemicals concentrate there
• Discard cooking juices and don’t use them to make sauces or soups
Hudson River Fish Advisory Outreach Project

Goal

• All people who eat fish from the Hudson River know about, understand and follow the fish advisories

Strategies

• With 192 miles of river, the Project creates local partnerships

• Reach out to anglers and family members
  – with a range of free materials that target different audiences
  – through a variety of venues
Variety of Free Materials

- Brochure
- Poster
- Wallet-sized Angler Cards
Variety of Free Materials

Coloring Book

Signs, brochures, posters and magnets available in Spanish

Website health.ny.gov/hudsonriverfish
**NOTICE!**
Some fish and crabs from these waters may be harmful to eat.

Learn more!
Call NYS Department of Health
518-402-7800
800-458-1158

**WARNING!**
Fish and crabs from these waters contain chemicals and may be harmful to eat, especially for women and children.

Learn more!
Call NYS Department of Health
518-402-7800
800-458-1158

south of the bridge at Catskill
north of the bridge at Catskill

Voluntary by property owners
Conflicts with “No Trespassing”
Funded Partners

Hudson Basin River Watch

• “River Haggie Outdoors” - environmental educator

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Dutchess County

• In-home nutrition education program

• Dutchess County Hudson River Fish Advisory Committee organized a conference on Hudson fishing in March 2012
Funded Partners

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rockland County

- Collaborate with Rockland DOH nutritionist and Americorps interns
- Developed Rockland-specific materials and run a bus ad each year
- Organize annual “River Romp” day for children, work with day camps and approach anglers on the river
Who Do We Need to Reach?

• Downstate less aware of health advice
• DOH shoreline survey (1999) - 63% of white, 22% of black and 13% of Hispanic anglers aware of advisory
• DOH and partners’ survey at boat and outdoor shows (2010):
  – 25% fished the Hudson
  – 60% share catch with family and friends
Who Do We Need to Reach?

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Dutchess County began to do consumption surveys in 2011

- 40% ate fish they or someone they knew caught
- 31% ate Hudson fish
- 24% reported eating Hudson crabs
- 66% aware there is advice on eating fish
- The most popular way to cook is frying
- #1 reason participants ate local fish: TASTE
Reaching People: A Variety of Approaches and Partners

- Mini grants – environmental education and nutrition programs
- Schools, after-school programs, camps and libraries
- Fishing, conservation, boating associations and non-profits
- Health providers and food banks
- Community festivals and county fairs
Reaching New Hudson Valley Residents

- Migrant workers
- ESL classes
- Work with immigrant-refugee advocates
Moving Forward

• More consumption surveys
• Online trimming-skinning and information on cleaning crabs
• More partners!
  • More wildlife-conservation groups, faith communities, housing authorities, academic institutions....
Support the Project

Support the Project
- Distribute materials
- Property owners – post signs
- Link to our website
- Invite us to events

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Women under 50 and children under 15 should not eat ANY fish or crabs from the Hudson River from the Corinth Dam to the Battery

Men over 15 and women over 50 should follow the advice listed on this page:

**Upstream of the Rt. 9 Bridge**
Visit www.health.ny.gov/fish for this advice.

**Upper Hudson**
From the Rt. 8 Bridge to Troy Dam
- Do not eat fish from the Route 8 Bridge to the Troy Dam.
- From Baker’s Falls to the Troy Dam, New York’s State Department of Environmental Conservation’s “catch and release” regulations apply.
- Take No Fish, Eat No Fish.

**Mid Hudson**
From Troy Dam to Bridge at Catskill
- Men over 15 & Women over 50
  - Eat up to one meal a month:
    - Alewife
    - Rock bass
    - Blueback herring
    - Yellow perch
  - Do not eat other fish from the Mid Hudson including striped bass

**Lower Hudson**
From Bridge at Catskill to the NYC Battery
- Men over 15 & Women over 50
  - Eat up to six crabs a week:
    - Blue crab
    - Do not eat the tomatos (green stuff, mustard) or reuse cooking water
- Eat up to four meals a month:
  - All other species
  - *DEC regulations prohibit taking American eel for food from the Hudson River

The health advice also applies to tributaries and connected waters if there are no dams, falls or barriers to stop the fish from moving upstream.

Women under 50 and children under 15 should not eat ANY fish or crabs from the Hudson River from the Corinth Dam to the Battery