

DEC's Fish Monitoring Project

What we're doing:

With funding from EPA and NOAA, we're analyzing over 600 samples of salmon (all five species), halibut, pacific cod, sablefish, black rockfish, lingcod and pollock for heavy metals (methyl mercury, lead, cadmium). A subset will be analyzed for dioxins and furans, pesticides, PCB congeners, inorganic arsenic, and chromium VI. Samples will be collected primarily in marine waters throughout the state.

We will also analyze Northern pike from lakes in the Koyukuk, Kuskokwim, Yukon, and Susitna River drainages and Sheefish for heavy metals.

Why we're doing it:

To reinforce that Alaskan seafood is safe to eat. Persistent Organic Pollutants are appearing everywhere, including pristine Arctic climates. The assumption is that the majority of these pollutants are coming from somewhere other than Alaska. Limited samples of Alaskan fish have not found levels of concern. The Department of Environmental Conservation wants to fortify those studies with a broader sample size that includes more species and more locations.

International markets are concerned about contamination and want evidence that products are safe. Over 60% of the seafood processed in the U.S. comes from Alaskan waters. Based on high contaminant levels in other states, federal agencies have issued national consumption advisories for some fish species. Information about the quality of Alaskan species is needed to reduce concerns.

Alaskans - especially those living in rural areas - eat much more wild food than people in other parts of the United States, and for Native Alaskans harvesting local food is an integral part of their culture.

What it will tell us:

By comparing results to national health standards set by EPA and FDA, the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Epidemiology Section will be able to determine if any consumption advice should be given.



**Alaska Department
of Environmental
Conservation**

**Division of
Environmental
Health**

**Fish Monitoring
Project**

Who is working with us:

Sample collectors include the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, NOAA (Sablefish Survey), International Pacific Halibut Commission and Native Fishermen.

Peer reviewers of our project include researchers at NOAA, EPA, and the Alaska Dept of Health and Social Services.

We will also share our samples with universities in Idaho, Washington, and Alaska and EPA to further work in evaluating toxicology and salmon health issues.



When we'll have some answers:

Samples started arriving at our Seafood and Food Safety Laboratory the summer of 2002. Preliminary results will be reviewed by stakeholders and should be available by spring of 2003.

A final report of our initial results should be ready by the fall of 2003 and will be available on DEC's web site at www.state.ak.us/dec/deh/contaminants/

What's next:

Analysis is expensive. Testing for all contaminants costs over \$3,000 per sample. Depending on results from the first year and additional funding, a statewide sampling plan will be created. The plan will define: 1) where on-going routine sampling is needed for sentinel monitoring, 2) areas or species that may need further evaluation, and 3) what new species or locations need to be assessed.



Who to contact:

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<http://www.state.ak.us/dec/deh/contaminants/>