

Fish Mercury Project

A Pilot Program for Monitoring, Stakeholder Involvement, and Risk Communication Relating to Mercury in Fish in the Bay-Delta Watershed

Fish contamination is a serious environmental and public health concern. Mercury accumulates in fish in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta watershed at levels that may pose health risks to people who consume the fish. Mercury is prevalent in our watershed due to human activities, such as historic gold mining in the Sierra Nevada, but further research is needed to understand the extent of the problem.

California Bay-Delta Authority approved a \$4.5 million proposal to examine mercury and other chemicals in fish in the Bay-Delta watershed, and to increase public awareness of fish contamination issues, with the overall goal of reducing human exposure to mercury. Partners in this project include the San Francisco Estuary Institute, UC Davis, the California Department of Fish and Game, Moss Landing Marine Lab, the California Department of Health Services, and the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment.

The objectives of the project are to:

- **Examine contamination patterns in fish in the Bay-Delta watershed by sampling and testing sport fish as well as other species of fish. (Sampling of fish will begin in the summer of 2005.)**
- **Explore how ecosystem restoration and landscape changes affect mercury levels in fish.**
- **Inform populations that consume fish about the health risks of exposure to mercury and other chemicals.**
- **Establish a Steering Committee (January 2005) and work with stakeholder groups who will guide fish monitoring and risk communication activities.**

The California Department of Health Services, Environmental Health Investigations Branch will be facilitating the involvement of local stakeholders in the project and implementing risk communication activities. This includes:

- Outreaching to community leaders
- Informing communities about monitoring efforts
- Expanding an existing Local Stakeholder Advisory Group
- Evaluating current data on fishing activities
- Developing educational materials, activities, and training curriculum
- Hosting a public forum

Stakeholders interested in participating in this study should contact:

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