



INTER-TRIBAL FISHERIES ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

SAULT STE. MARIE TRIBE OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS

Chippewa / Ottawa Treaty Fishery Management Authority

News Release

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Testing of Lake Superior fish show low levels of contaminants

There's good news for people who like to eat fish. Lake Superior fish are well below government guidelines for safe consumption. Lake Superior whitefish and lake trout collected from commercial catches in the Whitefish Bay area recently tested well below state and federal guidelines.

Contaminant levels of the Lake Superior fish were analyzed as part of a long-term fish contaminant monitoring program conducted by the Inter-Tribal Fisheries and Assessment Program (ITFAP) in order to determine contaminant levels in commercially caught fish. Results from an independent laboratory analysis are compared to contaminant levels determined to be safe by various government agencies. ITFAP also shares the results with these agencies, including the Michigan Department of Public Health.

Lake Superior fish were tested for a wide range of contaminants, including mercury, PCBs, dioxins and pesticides such as DDT. All fish were considerably below the guidelines for commercial fish issued by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and below the Michigan Department of Public Health's guidelines for consumption of sport fish by the general public.

Lake Superior fish were remarkably low in mercury, especially when compared to levels of mercury found in fish from most inland lakes. Mercury, mostly from sources such as coal burning electrical plants, accumulates in rain and snow and then concentrates in the smaller inland lakes.

Levels of pesticides such as DDT, which was banned in the United States in the 1970s, are also remarkably low in Lake Superior fish. Contaminant levels in fish from all of the Great Lakes have declined dramatically since the 1970s, when regulations were put in place to reduce pollution.

These results are encouraging for those who enjoy eating Great Lakes fish, especially since studies show that most Americans eat a diet high in saturated animal fats. Most Americans could dramatically reduce their risk of heart attack and stroke by switching to a more lean protein source, such as properly prepared fish (fillet and cook with no additional fat).

Other studies also show that a different type of fat, Omega-3 fatty acids, significantly reduces the risk of heart disease and may actually reduce the risk of cancer. Great Lakes fish (like whitefish, lake trout, or chub) are especially high in Omega-3 fatty acids.

For more information, contact Mike Ripley, ITFAP Environmental Coordinator, at 906-632-0072.

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Inter-Tribal Fisheries Assessment Program Contaminant Monitoring Program

TOTAL PCB LEVELS FOR LAKE SUPERIOR WHITEFISH & LAKE TROUT

