

EAT SAFE FISH

GET TO KNOW WHICH FISH FROM
THE DETROIT RIVER ARE SAFE TO EAT



DETROIT RIVER
C A N A D I A N
C L E A N U P

detroitriver.ca

DISCLAIMER

This document is based on the information given in the Guide to Eating Ontario Fish. This is for information purposes only. Please consult the Guide for more detailed advice, especially if you eat multiple species or fish from other locations.

The information has not been endorsed by the governments of Ontario or Canada. The content is based on information given for the Canadian side of the Detroit River only.



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EATING ONTARIO FISH

Fish can provide high-quality protein to maintain a balanced diet and offer a great source of omega-3 fats and other nutrients. However, fish caught from Ontario lakes and rivers can present a risk of exposure to harmful contaminants, based on their size, type, and location caught. The Detroit River's water quality has improved over the last 30 years but there are still some chemicals in the water that can collect in fish such as mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and dioxins/furans.

Since the 1970s, the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) has monitored specific chemicals in fish flesh as part of the province-wide Fish Contaminant Monitoring Program. Fish consumption advisories are produced from the information collected in the program and published in the Guide to Eating Ontario Fish

(or Guide, for short). A polluted fish may not taste, look or smell different than a fish that is not polluted. That's why it's important to follow the advice for choosing and eating fish. The Guide provides information to the public that can be used to guide consumption of fish caught from Ontario lakes and rivers to minimize exposure to toxins.

This booklet is for the Ontario side of the Detroit River only. It is meant to provide an easy-to-understand summary of the advice given in the Guide so you can make the best choices to eat safe fish from the Detroit River. As the Detroit River is a bi-national river connecting the United States and Canada, there are different consumption restrictions, advisories, and guidelines issued by the State of Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).



CHOOSE WISELY. EAT SAFELY

There are several ways people can reduce their risk of consuming contaminants from fish. The following recommendations and practices can help individuals make the safest choice when deciding which fish to target, consume, and prepare:

- Follow the advice of the MECP Guide to Eating Ontario Fish and continue to observe updates every few years (most recent update occurred in 2025);
- Choose smaller and or leaner fish species for consumption. Avoid consuming large, predatory fish and bottom feeders;
- When preparing fish for consumption, remove all visible fat and skin from the fish;
- Cook fish on a grill, rack, or broiler pan to allow fat to drip away from the fillet; and
- Do not consume fish organs.

Some contaminants, such as mercury, can be found throughout the fish flesh and are not removable by trimming skin or fat. Therefore, it is always best to follow fish consumption guidelines.



KNOW THE 3 CS: CHOOSE, CLEAN, COOK

Choose wisely: Smaller fish tend to have fewer chemicals. Some species have fewer chemicals based on their feeding habits and location (e.g., bass, walleye, perch, panfish).

Clean and trim: Some chemicals like PCBs and dioxins collect in the fat of the fish. Cleaning and trimming the fat before cooking can reduce your risk of eating chemicals. Remove the fillet, cut away skin, trim any fat and throw away the organs

Cook: Even after trimming away visible fat, some fat can still be present inside the fillet. Cook fish on a grill, rack, or broiler pan in the oven so that fat drips away. If you deep-fry fish, do not reuse the oil.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

This booklet is meant to be a quick, easy-to-understand guide to choosing and eating safe fish from the Detroit River. Follow these simple steps with this guide to make sure you Eat Safe Fish.

- 1 Determine where you are fishing (*Upper Reach or Lower Reach* Detroit River).
- 2 Are you considered to be in the general or sensitive population?
- 3 Identify and measure your fish.
- 4 Refer to this booklet or check the Guide to Eating Ontario Fish to find out if the fish you caught is safe to eat.
- 5 Keep your catch on ice or in a refrigerator to avoid spoilage until it can be cooked or preserved.

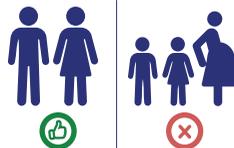
The information provided is derived from advice given for the Detroit River in the Guide to Eating Ontario Fish.



For more details or advice for other locations, visit www.ontario.ca/fishguide

General vs. Sensitive Populations

General Population:
Refers to an average sized adult weighing 154 lbs.

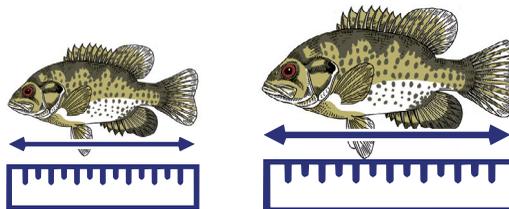


Sensitive Population:
Refers to Children under 15 years of age and people who are pregnant or may become pregnant.



The size of the fish matters

There is different advice given for different sizes of the same species. Use a measuring tape to check the size of your catch (from the tip of its nose to the tip of its tail).



The size will determine what colour code your fish will have. (see page 9)



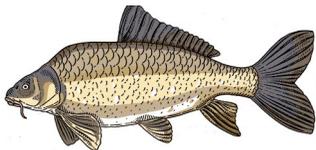
WHAT KIND OF FISH DID YOU CATCH?

Make sure you know what type of fish you caught to ensure you're making the best choices.

Use this booklet to help identify your catch.
See example below.

EXAMPLE

NAME OF FISH ←



← IMAGE OF FISH

General Population
Upper Reach



Lower Reach



Sensitive Population
Upper Reach



Lower Reach



HOW MUCH YOU EAT MATTERS

The advice in the Guide to Eating Ontario Fish is based on the amount of skinless, boneless fish eaten, measured by the number of meals eaten.

One meal is about 227 g or 8 oz (size of a dinner plate or two adult palms)



Fillet without skin



Fillet with skin

One meal
=



8 oz

1/2 meal
=



4 oz

WHAT THE COLOURS AND NUMBERS MEAN

To make choosing which Detroit River fish to eat easier, fish are categorized into three colours: red, yellow, and green based on how many meals per month are recommended in the Guide to Eating Ontario Fish. Don't forget that different sizes and species will have different coloured symbols!



Green fish = Unrestricted
Safer choice (8 or more meals per month)



Yellow fish = Partially restricted
Caution, limit consumption (1-4 meals per month)



Red fish = Restricted
Avoid, do not eat (0 meals per month)



Outlined fish = N/A
No information currently available

The numbers on the fish indicate the number of meals you should eat per month. See example below.



You can eat
this fish
12 meals/month



You can eat
this fish
4 meals/month



You should NOT
eat this fish at all

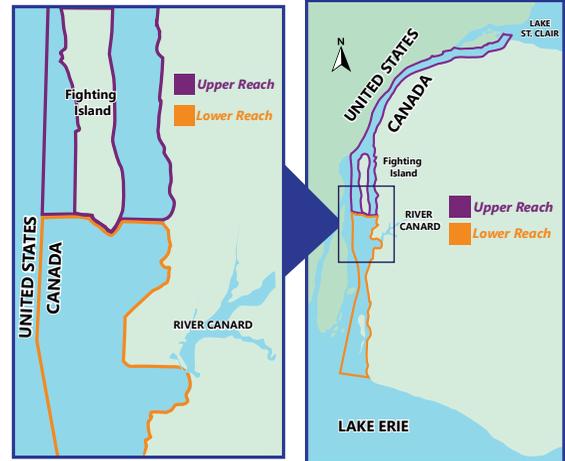
WHERE YOU CATCH MATTERS

There is different consumption advice for eating Detroit River fish depending on where you catch them. The Detroit River is divided into the:

Upper Reach of the Detroit River
(from Lake St Clair to Fighting Island)

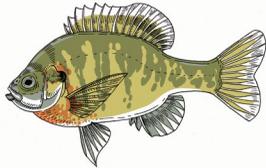
Lower Reach of the Detroit River
(from south of Fighting Island to Lake Erie).

There is different advice given for different sizes of the same species for each reach. Use a measuring tape to check the size of your catch (from the tip of its nose to the tip of its tail).



FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORIES FOR THE DETROIT RIVER

BLUEGILL



General Population

Upper Reach

32 15-25 cm

Lower Reach

32 15-20 cm

Sensitive Population

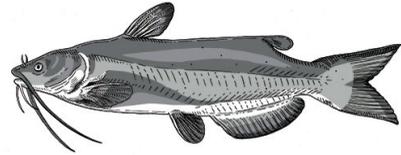
Upper Reach

16 15-25 cm

Lower Reach

12 15-20 cm

CHANNEL CATFISH



General Population

Upper Reach

2 25-45 cm

1 40-50 cm

0 50-60 cm

Lower Reach

N/A

Sensitive Population

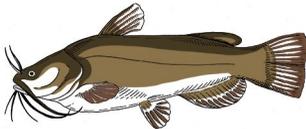
Upper Reach

0 25-60 cm

Lower Reach

N/A

BROWN BULLHEAD



General Population

Upper Reach

16 25-30 cm

8 30-35 cm

Lower Reach

N/A

Sensitive Population

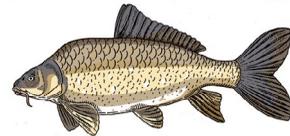
Upper Reach

8 25-30 cm

0 30-35 cm

Lower Reach

COMMON CARP



General Population

Upper Reach

12 30-35 cm

8 35-40 cm

4 40-45 cm

2 45-75 cm

Lower Reach

2 45->75 cm

Sensitive Population

Upper Reach

12 30-35 cm

8 35-40 cm

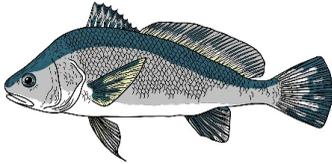
4 40-45 cm

0 45-75 cm

Lower Reach

0 45->75 cm

FRESHWATER DRUM



General Population

Upper Reach

16 25-35 cm

12 35-40 cm

4 40-60 cm

Lower Reach

16 20-40 cm

12 40-45 cm

4 45-55 cm

2 55-60 cm

Sensitive Population

Upper Reach

8 20-30 cm

4 30-40 cm

0 40-60 cm

Lower Reach

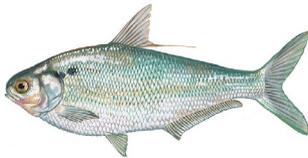
12 20-25 cm

8 25-40 cm

4 40-45 cm

0 45-60 cm

GIZZARD SHAD



General Population

Upper Reach

1 35-50 cm

Lower Reach

N/A

Sensitive Population

Upper Reach

0 35-50 cm

Lower Reach

N/A

GOLDFISH



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General Population

Upper Reach

16 25-35 cm

Lower Reach

N/A

Sensitive Population

Upper Reach

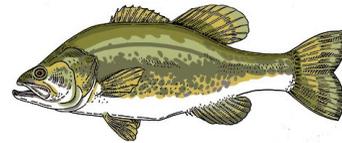
8 25-30 cm

4 30-35 cm

Lower Reach

N/A

LARGEMOUTH BASS



General Population

Upper Reach

4 20-45 cm

Lower Reach

16 15-35 cm

12 35-40 cm

8 40-50 cm

Sensitive Population

Upper Reach

4 20-40 cm

0 40-45 cm

Lower Reach

16 15-20 cm

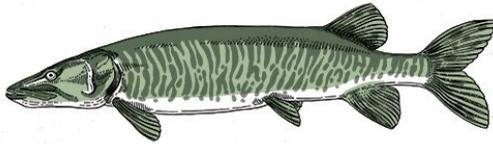
12 20-25 cm

8 25-30 cm

4 30-45 cm

0 45-50 cm

NORTHERN PIKE



General Population Upper Reach

8 40->75 cm

Lower Reach

N/A

Sensitive Population Upper Reach

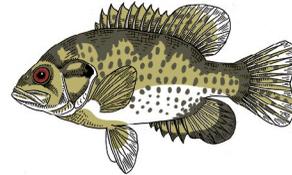
8 40-60 cm

4 60->75 cm

Lower Reach

N/A

ROCK BASS



General Population Upper Reach

16 15-20 cm

12 20-25 cm

4 25-30 cm

Lower Reach

12 15-20 cm

8 20-30 cm

Sensitive Population Upper Reach

4 15-25 cm

0 25-30 cm

Lower Reach

8 15-25 cm

4 25-30 cm

PUMPKINSEED



General Population Upper Reach

16 15-25 cm

Lower Reach

N/A

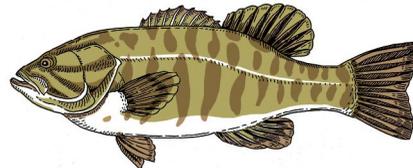
Sensitive Population Upper Reach

8 15-20 cm

Lower Reach

N/A

SMALLMOUTH BASS



General Population Upper Reach

N/A

Lower Reach

4 30-50 cm

Sensitive Population Upper Reach

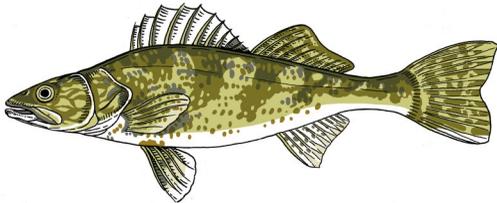
N/A

Lower Reach

4 30-40 cm

0 40-50 cm

WALLEYE



General Population Upper Reach

8 25-60 cm

4 60-75 cm

Lower Reach

12 25-55 cm

8 55-60 cm

4 60-65 cm

Sensitive Population Upper Reach

8 25-40 cm

4 40-60 cm

0 60-75 cm

Lower Reach

12 25-35 cm

8 35-45 cm

4 45-60 cm

0 60-65 cm

WHITE BASS



General Population Upper Reach

4 25-35 cm

2 35-40 cm

1 40-45 cm

Lower Reach

8 20-30 cm

4 30-40 cm

2 40-45 cm

Sensitive Population Upper Reach

4 25-35 cm

0 35-45 cm

Lower Reach

8 20-30 cm

4 30-40 cm

0 40-45 cm

WHITE PERCH



General Population

Upper Reach

4 15-25 cm

2 25-30 cm

1 30-35 cm

Lower Reach

4 15-35 cm

Sensitive Population

Upper Reach

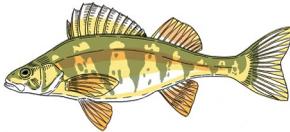
4 15-25 cm

0 25-35 cm

Lower Reach

4 15-35 cm

YELLOW PERCH



General Population

Upper Reach

4 15-30 cm

Lower Reach

12 15-30 cm

4 30-40 cm

Sensitive Population

Upper Reach

4 15-30 cm

0 25-35 cm

Lower Reach

12 15-25 cm

8 25-30 cm

0 30-40 cm

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the support, feedback, and contributions from members of the Detroit River RAP team. The Detroit River RAP is a locally-based partnership to restore water quality and ecosystem health in the Detroit River in order to remove it from the list of Great Lakes Areas of Concern.

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Canada
Water Agency



Ministry of the Environment,
Conservation and Parks



Essex Region Conservation
the place for life





DETROIT RIVER

CANADIAN

CLEANUP

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