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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "WARNINGS EXPANDED ON EATING MANY FISH" NSY  
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# Warnings expanded on eating many fish

The advisories come four days before fishing season opens, and include saltwater species for the first time.

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Staff Writer

Maine public health officials significantly expanded their warnings Friday against eating many of the fish caught in the state's lakes, rivers and coastal waters.

For the first time, the advisories issued by the Bureau of Health also recommended limits on the consumption of saltwater species, including bluefish and striped bass.

The warnings, released four days before fishing season opens Tuesday, reflect new information about the presence of mercury, dioxin and PCBs in Maine waters.

State officials sought to cast the advisories in a positive light, noting that consumption limits have been lifted on certain species.

But others said the warnings underline how far Maine has to go before its waters are really clean.

"Unfortunately, the warnings are applied to the fish that are most plentiful and most commonly eaten," said George Smith, executive director of the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine. "That's what really hurts."

The most extensive advisory is designed to protect against mercury, a heavy metal deposited widely over the landscape by coal-fired power plants, incinerators and factories.

Mercury can damage the nervous system, and state officials have warned the public to limit fish consumption from lakes and ponds to avoid health effects since 1994. Friday, the warning was extended to Maine's rivers and streams as well.

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### FISH

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The warnings include strict limits that vary according to the species of fish for pregnant women, nursing mothers, women who may become pregnant and children under age 8.

More moderate consumption limits were recommended for all other people.

Officials issued their first warnings ever for striped bass and bluefish, both saltwater species, because of mercury contamination.

Advisories were also extended into new areas because of contamination from polychlorinated biphenyl, an electrical coolant known as PCB that has been linked with cancer.

Waters with PCB advisories include several brooks and rivers from New Hampshire to Canada, such as the Salmon Falls River below South Berwick and Red Brook in Scarborough.

Dioxin, a byproduct of incineration and papermaking, continues to limit fish consumption below paper mills on five rivers.

Lobster liver, called the tomalley, also remains on the advisory list because of its dioxin content.

The data that support the advisories were gathered by state programs that monitor surface waters for dioxin and other toxic chemicals.

Dr. Dora Anne Mills, director of the Bureau of Health, noted that the data allowed the state to relax the mercury advisory for certain species.

She also pointed out that dioxin levels in fish have declined.

"There is some good news to be told," Mills said.

But a staff member at the Natural Resources Council of Maine, the state's largest environmental advocacy group, said the advisories should be more conservative.

Anne Hagstrom, the council's water project director, suggested

### FISH ADVISORIES

Here are the fish consumption advisories issued Friday by the state Bureau of Health:

#### MERCURY

In all inland waters, pregnant women, nursing mothers,

women who may become pregnant and children under age 8 should eat no warm water species (bass, pickerel, perch, sunfish or crappie). Consumption of cold-water species (trout, salmon, cusk or smelt) should be limited to one meal a month. Avoid eating older cold-water fish, such as large lake trout.

All other people should eat no more than two or three meals a month of warm water species. No consumption limit for cold-water fish.

For coastal waters, pregnant women, nursing mothers and children should eat no more than one meal of striped bass or bluefish per month.

All others should limit consumption to two or three meals of striped bass or one meal of bluefish per month.

#### PCBs

No fish consumption on the Little Madawaska River or its tributaries from Madawaska Dam to Grimes Mill Road; or

in Green Pond, Chapman Pit and Greenlaw Brook on the former site of Loring Air Force Base.

No more than six meals per year from Red Brook in Scarborough.

#### DIOXIN and PCBs

No more than six meals per year on the Androscoggin River from Gilead to Merrymeeting Bay; and on the Salmon Falls River below South Berwick.

No more than one to two meals per month on the Kennebec River from Madison to Edwards Dam in Augusta; and on the Penobscot River below Lincoln.

No more than two meals a month on the West Branch of the Sebasticook River below Hartland.

No more than one meal a month on the East Branch of the Sebasticook River below Corinna.

No freshwater fish consumption on the Kennebec River from Edwards Dam in Augusta to The Chops in Bath.

Pregnant women, nursing mothers and women who may become pregnant should not eat lobster tomalley. All others should limit their tomalley consumption to one lobster a month.

that residents and tourists may not understand the state's increasingly complex array of advisories.

"It is time for the state to really notify Maine citizens and tourists in a manner that reaches everyone in a straightforward and understandable manner," she said.

Smith, at the sportsmen's group, said his organization also will press state officials to follow up on Fri-

day's announcement.

"I'm waiting for the (state) to say how they're going to make this readily available," he said.

FOR LINKS to Internet information on dioxin and its effects, see the Press Herald's World Wide Web site:

[www.portland.com](http://www.portland.com)