

SEPTEMBER 2025

RESTORING THE RIVER

Official Newsletter of The St. Marys River Remedial Action Plan



Part 2: Restrictions on Fish Consumption BUI

What is The Guide to Eating Ontario Fish?

The Guide to Eating Ontario Fish provides up-to-date information to help you make informed choices about safely consuming fish caught in the province's lakes and rivers. Developed by the Ontario government, the guide outlines recommended consumption limits based on species, size, and location, helping to reduce exposure to contaminants such as mercury and PCBs.

During the recent Fish Consumption Survey completed by The St. Marys Remedial Action Plan, it was discovered that only 59% of participants have heard of the Guide, and of those, only 44% of participants actually consult the Guide before eating their local catch.

Whether you're an avid angler or simply enjoy local fish, this guide is a free valuable resource for protecting your health while continuing to benefit from the nutritional value of fish.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/guide-eating-ontario-fish>



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Understanding The Meaning of Meals per Month

In the Guide to Eating Ontario Fish, meals per month refers to the number of recommended fish meals a person can safely eat from a specific species and location within a one-month period. One fish meal is considered to be about 226 grams of cooked fish for an average adult. These recommendations are based on contaminant levels found in the fish and are designed to help reduce potential health risks from long-term exposure.

In the fish consumption survey, meals/month is used to estimate how often individuals eat fish caught from Ontario waters. This measure helps researchers understand eating habits and assess potential exposure to contaminants.



What is a “Non-Restrictive” Diet?

When it comes to the Guide to Eating Ontario Fish and the Restrictions on Fish Consumption Beneficial Use Impairment (BUI), a non-restrictive diet refers to the ability to consume fish without significant limitations related to the type and quantities of fish.

When looking at the fish consumption BUI in The St. Marys River, for the general population it's considered “non-restrictive” when people can eat 8+ meals per month of locally caught fish. A “partial” advisory is limited to 1,2, and 4 meals/month, and a “complete” advisory recommends no consumption (do not eat).

Recent survey findings show that respondents are mostly following a non-restrictive diet, which is a positive sign that the majority of local fish are generally safe to eat.

It is important to be aware of sensitive groups; children, pregnant individuals, and those who rely on fish as a key part of their diet are more vulnerable to the effects of contaminants like mercury and PCBs. It is recommended that anyone within the sensitive group follows stricter guidelines, outlined in The Guide to Eating Ontario Fish.



One species found within the Great Lakes is Chinook Salmon. They are a large, migratory fish, and due to their longer lifespan and that they eat other fish, they can build up more contaminants like PCBs and mercury. This means there are slightly stricter consumption advisories for Chinook in the St. Marys River AOC.

In our recent survey, only 0.45% of participants reported eating more than the recommended amount of Chinook salmon. This suggests that many people are already following the advisories provided by The Guide to Eating Ontario Fish.



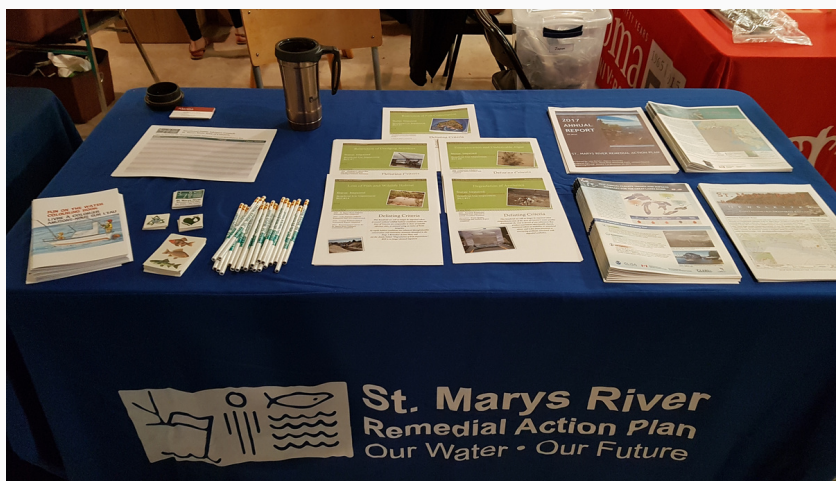
Coming Up Next

This is just the beginning! We have five more newsletters on the way, diving deeper into the findings from the Fish Consumption BUI and community fish consumption survey and what they mean for our community and the health of the St. Marys River.

Upcoming issues will explore historical pollution points, highlight favourite fishing locations both on and off the river, and share what people enjoy most - whether it's eating their catch, catch-and-release, or simply enjoying the river in other ways.

We'll also be spotlighting the most preferred fish species, how often people eat local fish, and the most popular (and professional-recommended!) ways to prepare it.

Finally, we'll walk through the steps to delisting the fish consumption BUI and what progress looks like. There are also outreach events coming up, so keep an eye out! If you have an event you'd like us to be part of, please don't hesitate to reach out.



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