

# Focus on: Mercury Trends in Freshwater Fish - Fall 2024

## What are we doing?

Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) scientists collect fish to analyze for the presence of mercury in the water body. Fish will be sampled from the following Washington lakes this fall:

- Banks Lake (Grant County)
- Failor Lake (Grays Harbor County)
- Kitsap Lake (Kitsap County)
- Pierre Lake (Stevens County)
- Snake River (Asotin County)
- Lake Whatcom (Whatcom County)

We will collect largemouth and smallmouth bass using electrofishing, nets, and/or angling. The monitoring period is from mid-September through October; most sites will only take 1-3 nights. Required state and federal scientific collection permits are issued for these samplings.

## Why do we do this?

We study the amount of mercury in edible freshwater fish tissue to understand if contamination levels are changing over time. Each year, we collect 10 individual largemouth bass or smallmouth bass from six waterbodies to analyze total mercury accumulation in fillets. We return to the same waterbodies every five years to see how mercury levels change over time. Monitoring is important because mercury persists in the environment, builds up in fish and human tissue, and is toxic in large amounts.

Ecology last sampled these lakes in 2009, 2014, and 2019. This will be the fourth year of testing these waterbodies for mercury.

## Results are coming soon!

We expect our 2024 results will be available as an interactive StoryMap and in Ecology's EIM database by Fall 2025. Reports for previous sampling years are available on Ecology's publication page. All of these resources are linked on [Ecology's Mercury Trends in Freshwater Fish webpage](#)<sup>1, QR</sup>.

Information gained from this project also provides the Washington State Department of Health (WA DOH) with data to offer guidance on how much fish can be safely eaten under specific circumstances. See the [WA DOH fish consumption advisories](#)<sup>2</sup> for fish in your area.

## Related Links



<sup>1</sup><https://ecology.wa.gov/Research-Data/Monitoring-assessment/toxics-monitoring/Mercury-in-fish-tissue>

<sup>2</sup><https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/food/fish/advisories>

## Contact Information

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## ADA accessibility

To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 360-407-6831 or email at [ecyadacoordinator@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:ecyadacoordinator@ecy.wa.gov), or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341.