

Focus on: Mercury and PFAS Trends in Freshwater Fish — Fall 2025

What are we doing?

Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) scientists collect fish to analyze for the presence of mercury and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in freshwaters across the state. Fish will be sampled from the following Washington water bodies this fall:

- Lacamas Lake (Clark County)
- Liberty Lake (Spokane County)
- Loon Lake (Stevens County)
- Potholes Reservoir (Grant County)
- Silver Lake (Cowlitz County)
- Lake Spokane (Spokane County)
- Yakima River (RM 19, Benton County)

We will collect fish samples using an electrofishing boat, 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 and PFAS 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 seven water bodies to analyze total mercury and PFAS accumulation in fillets. We return to the same water bodies every five years to see how contaminant levels change. Monitoring is important because mercury and PFAS persist in the environment, build up in fish and human tissue, and can be toxic to people and wildlife that eat the fish.

Ecology last sampled mercury in fish collected from these water bodies in 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2020. This will be the first year of testing for PFAS at the sites. We're adding Lacamas Lake this year, which was previously sampled for mercury in 2002.

Results are coming soon!

We expect our 2025 results to be available as an interactive StoryMap and in Ecology's EIM database by Fall 2026. Reports for previous sampling years are available on Ecology's publication page. These resources are linked on [Ecology's Mercury Trends in Freshwater Fish webpage](#)^{1, QR}.

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](#)² for fish in your area.

Related Links



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

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

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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, or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341.