

# State Agencies that Oversee Fishing Should Improve Collaboration

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Thirty million U.S. residents fish recreationally, yet many may be unaware that some of the fish they catch are not safe to eat. Recreational fishing is regulated broadly at the state level by two types of state agencies. One agency (usually a fish and game agency) oversees recreational fishing as a natural resource and for tourism. The other type of agency (usually a health department) oversees the testing and reporting of chemicals such as mercury or PCBs in fish from local streams, lakes, and estuaries.

All 50 states issue some type of fish catch regulation and fish consumption advisory. Catch regulations (such as bag limits or size limits) are issued in fishing guide magazines, on fish and game agency websites, and are often posted at fishing sites. Consumption advisories are often posted at fishing sites and may be listed on agency websites. There is a great opportunity for these two types of agencies to coordinate catch regulations and consumption advisories.

### Key Findings

- In 2010, over 1,000 consumption advisories were issued by health departments in the U.S.
- Many states send mixed messages about which fish are permissible to catch and which are safe to eat.
- More than half of states' fish and game agencies did not report detailed fish consumption advisories in their fishing guide magazines.
- Only three state agencies (in Georgia, Missouri, and New Mexico) listed catch regulations for their state within consumption advisory documents.

### Public Health Concerns

- Recreational fishers consume twice the national average of seafood, thereby increasing their exposure to seafood contaminants.
- The EPA has found that many bodies of water contain fish with harmful levels of mercury, pesticides such as DDT and mirex, or industrial chemicals like PCBs and dioxins.
- Recreational fish consumption advisories are the best means of informing recreational fishers about the safety of eating the fish they catch.

### Who We Are

Based within the Bloomberg School of Public Health, The Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (CLF) is an academic center that conducts and promotes research and communicates information about the complex inter-relationships among food production, diet, environment and human health.

### SEASONS, MINIMUM SIZES, DAILY CREEL & POSSESSION LIMITS

The following tables summarize rules governing the harvest and possession of fish species that anglers commonly catch in Maryland. This is an abridged summary and does not include all regulated species. Full information and updates are available at: [www.dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/regulations/regindex.asp](http://www.dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/regulations/regindex.asp).

SPECIES	NONTIDAL HOOK & LINE			REMARKS
	MINIMUM SIZE LIMITS	CLOSED SEASON	CREEL LIMIT	
AMERICAN EEL	6 inches		Daily – 25 Possession – 25	Eels may not be taken by gig in any Put-and-Take Trout Fishing Areas or Special Trout Fisheries Management Area.
BAITFISH (Including madtoms)			Daily – 35 in aggregate Possession – 35 in aggregate	
BASS (largemouth & smallmouth)	12 inches or as provided for by special regulations.	March 1– June 15	Daily – 5 in aggregate Possession – 10 in aggregate	Catch & Release is permitted at all times.
BIVALVE/SHELLFISH (mussels & clams)		No Open Season		
CARP	None		Daily – 15 Possession – 30	
CHAIN PICKEREL	14 inches		Daily – 5 Possession – 5	
CHANNEL CATFISH	None		Daily – 5 Possession – 10	
CRAPPIE	None		Daily – 15 Possession – 30	
HERRING (alewife & blueback)		No Open Season		
MUSKELLUNGE & TIGER MUSKIE	36 inches		Daily – 1 Possession – 1	
NORTHERN BASS	30 inches		Daily – 2 Possession – 2	
		No Open Season		Catch & Release is permitted

Taken from 'Maryland Guide to Fishing 2013'

### Research Summary

Researchers at the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future reviewed statewide data from 50 state fish and game agencies and health departments to discover which fish species were listed with advisories. The researchers then analyzed the data and made recommendations on more coordinated reporting among agencies to protect the health of recreational fishers.

### Strategies for Action

- Fish and game agencies and health departments should work together to coordinate catch regulations and consumption advisories for particular water bodies.
- The EPA National Listing of Fish Advisories should also include information about fish catch regulations listed for all water bodies with fish consumption advisories.

### Full Title:

State-Level Recreational Fishing Regulations and Fish Consumption Advisories in the United States: Identifying Opportunities for Improved Interagency Collaboration

### Abstract available at:

[journals.lww.com/jphmp/Abstract/publishahead/State\\_Level\\_Recreational\\_Fishing\\_Regulations\\_and.99943.aspx](http://journals.lww.com/jphmp/Abstract/publishahead/State_Level_Recreational_Fishing_Regulations_and.99943.aspx)