

Department of Public Health issues new fish consumption advisories based on PFAS in fish at 13 state parks

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

3/06/2023

- Department of Public Health

BOSTON — The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) has issued new fish consumption advisories to provide guidance for people who catch and consume freshwater fish from 13 waterbodies at state parks operated by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Recent testing of fish from these locations found levels of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) above DPH-recommended levels for regular consumption.

During recent testing of recreational waterbodies, elevated levels of PFAS were detected in fish sampled from:

- Ashland Reservoir in Ashland
- Chicopee Reservoir in Chicopee
- Lake Cochituate in Natick
- Dennison Lake in Winchendon
- Dunn Pond in Gardner
- Fearing Pond in Plymouth
- Houghtons Pond in Milton
- Pearce Lake in Saugus
- Pequot Pond in Westfield
- Lake Quinsigamond in Worcester
- Walden Pond in Concord
- Wallum Lake in Douglas
- Watsons Pond in Taunton

DPH also sampled surface water at these locations, and PFAS was not found at levels that would be unsafe for swimming or any other recreational activities at these locations.

PFAS are a group of man-made chemicals manufactured and used in a variety of consumer products and industries worldwide. Based on studies of laboratory animals and people, exposure to certain PFAS has been associated with changes in liver and kidney function, changes in thyroid hormone and cholesterol levels, and immune system effects. In addition, PFAS exposure has been shown to cause developmental effects to fetuses during pregnancy. Some studies also suggest an increased risk of developing cancer following long-term exposures to elevated levels of some PFAS.

DPH prioritized the testing of fish and surface water at these waterbodies because they are popular locations for swimming and fishing. They are also located in communities in or near [Environmental Justice Populations](#), where the existing burden of disease and exposure to sources of pollution are greatest. Surface water testing at seven marine beaches, including Carson, Constitution, Savin Hill, and Tenean beaches in Boston Harbor; Revere Beach in Broad Sound; Kings Beach in Nahant Bay; and Wollaston Beach in Quincy Bay showed that these beaches are safe for swimming.

The [fish consumption advisories](#) for the 13 waterbodies include guidance on the amount of fish that can be safely consumed from each individual location. This varies depending on the levels of PFAS found in the fish, other contaminants that have been evaluated in the past, and who might consume the fish. Advisories were developed for sensitive populations (including children under 12, people who are or may become pregnant, and nursing people) and for all others in the general population.

Because the new fish consumption advisories are different for each waterbody, recommendations range from consuming two meals per week to no fish consumption. DPH fish consumption advice applies to the consumption of all native game fish, but do not apply to stocked trout at a waterbody. Stocked fish are raised in fish hatcheries and then released.

Therefore, they are unlikely to spend enough time in a lake or pond to become contaminated.

DPH has recommended that DCR work with local health departments in Ashland, Chicopee, Concord, Douglas, Gardner, Milton, Natick, Plymouth, Saugus, Taunton, Westfield, Winchendon, and Worcester to help publicize this information for people in these communities that may visit the local state parks.

For more information about the fish consumption advisories and PFAS from DPH, please visit: [PFAS \(Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances\) in Recreationally Caught Fish](#).