

Consumption advice for recreational fishers – Hazelwood pondage fact sheet



Environment
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Authority Victoria

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Information bulletin

Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) recommends that recreational fishers restrict the consumption of barramundi caught at the Hazelwood Pondage to no more than one serve per week for adults* and one serve per fortnight for children**.

What is the reason for this advice?

Prior to opening the barramundi fishery in December 2016, Fisheries Victoria commissioned a human health risk assessment to inform fish consumption advice for a range of possible contaminants including for per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

PFAS was detected in the barramundi at levels which are considered safe, based on the health guideline values used nationally at the time.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand has now updated health guideline values for PFAS. The revised health guideline values have required changes to barramundi consumption advice issued for Hazelwood Pondage.

The contamination of Hazelwood Pondage is most likely the result of historical use of certain fire-fighting foams.

What is PFAS?

PFAS are a group of manufactured chemicals that have been used since the 1950s in a range of common household products and specialty applications, including in the manufacture of nonstick cookware; fabric, furniture and carpet stain protection applications; food packaging; some industrial processes; and in some types of fire-fighting foam.

There are many types of PFAS. The best known examples are Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA).

Perfluorohexane sulfonate (PFHxS) is also a common PFAS present in some fire-fighting foams.

PFAS are a concern because they can persist for a long time, both in the environment and in humans.

What are the health effects of PFAS?

Food Standards Australia New Zealand found that there is no consistent evidence that PFAS are harmful to human health, including in highly exposed occupational populations.

However, since these chemicals remain in humans and the environment for many years, it is recommended that as a precaution human exposure to PFAS be minimised wherever possible.

I have been catching and eating barramundi Hazelwood pondage. Should I be concerned?

While the revised health based guideline values has resulted in a change to fish consumption advice, it does not change our understanding of the health effects of PFAS.

The EPA is reassured by advice from the Commonwealth Department of Health that the guideline values used to inform the initial health risk assessment and fish consumption advice was protective of health.

There is no reason to expect that consumption of barramundi from Hazelwood Pondage would lead to any specific illness or adverse health effects.

Where can I get further information?

Information regarding the health effects of PFAS can be found at <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/factsheets/per-and-poly-fluoroalkyl-substances-factsheet>

Information on the FSANZ review of the health -based guidelines for PFAS can be found at www.foodstandards.gov.au

Information regarding fishing at Hazelwood Pondage is available from Fisheries Victoria at <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/fisheries>

* 1 serve for adults is 150 grams

** 1 serve for children is 75 grams (about 3 fish fingers)