

Background

Many Santa Clara Valley creeks and the San Francisco Bay are contaminated with mercury and Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs). Water quality agencies are addressing this problem by implementing several projects, such as identifying PCB and mercury source areas and referring them to regulatory agencies for clean-up, removing polluted sediment from water bodies, collecting and properly disposing products containing mercury and PCB, etc.

Since the general public can be exposed to these pollutants by consuming fish that have high levels of mercury and PCBs, Santa Clara Valley municipalities are also conducting outreach to educate residents on health concerns associated with consuming certain fish from local water bodies and the San Francisco Bay. This outreach is coordinated via SCVURPPP, which is an association of thirteen cities and towns in Santa Clara Valley, the County of Santa Clara, and the Santa Clara Valley Water District, working together to prevent stormwater pollution of local creeks and the San Francisco Bay.

Mercury and PCBs – Legacy Pollutants

High levels of **mercury** in water bodies are primarily the result of mining during California’s Gold Rush. Mercury was used to extract gold from gold-bearing rocks, and made its way into the air and waterways.

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were widely used in electrical equipment, hydraulic fluids, flame-retardants, insulation, roofing, etc., until banned in 1979 by the U.S. EPA due to health and safety concerns.

Mercury and PCBs are often referred to as “legacy” pollutants, meaning there are relatively few current uses, but past uses have left large amounts of these highly persistent pollutants in the environment.

SCVURPPP Outreach on Safe Consumption of Fish

Since FY 12-13, SCVURPPP has been using the “Guide to Eating Fish and Shellfish from San Francisco Bay” brochures developed by the California Department of Public Health for conducting local outreach about health risks of eating fish caught in the San Francisco Bay. These brochures are distributed through outreach activities and posted on SCVURPPP’s outreach website www.MyWatershedWatch.org. This website is promoted in all outreach conducted by SCVURPPP, including media advertisements, giveaways, brochures, and other collateral. SCVURPPP and its member agencies have implemented the following outreach activities to educate Santa Clara Valley residents on safe fish consumption:

Safe Consumption Signage

Signage prohibiting fishing or recommending catch-and-release only is posted at local water bodies where the Office of Health Hazard Assessment has issued fish consumption advisories. These include:

- **Guadalupe Reservoir**
- **Calero Reservoir**
- **Almaden Reservoir**
- **Guadalupe River**
- **Guadalupe Creek**
- **Alamitos Creek**
- **Vasona Lake**
- **Camden Ponds**
- **Stevens Creek Reservoir**



Warning sign posted at local site identified as contaminated

Point of Purchase Outreach at Fishing Supply Stores

SCVURPPP staff coordinates with these local fishing supply stores to make the “Guide to Eating Fish and Shellfish from San Francisco Bay” brochures available to customers:

- **Fisherman’s Warehouse** – 1120 Branham Ln., San Jose
- **Bateh Brothers** – 22690 Stevens Creek Blvd., Cupertino
- **Coyote Bait & Tackle** – 8215 Monterey Rd., San Jose
- **Stevens Creek Market** – 10629 S. Foothill Blvd., Cupertino
- **Bass Pro Shop** – 5160 Cherry Ave., San Jose

SCVURPPP staff visits each store three to four times a year to supply them with brochures.



Brochures displayed at a fishing supply store

Outreach Events

The brochures are distributed at SCVURPPP public outreach events including community fairs, Earth Day events, and local fishing clinics. In addition, the brochures are displayed at some local community centers and senior centers.

Education Programs at the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay Wildlife Refuge

SCVURPPP funds an interpretive program, called Watershed Watchers, at the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay Wildlife Refuge in Alviso. The Watershed Watchers program conducts numerous activities and sessions to educate children and adults about watersheds and urban runoff pollution prevention. SCVURPPP believes that it is particularly important to educate children about mercury and PCB contamination issues in the Bay, so they in turn may educate their parents about these issues. Many Watershed Watchers programs, including those conducted for Scouts groups, college groups, and elementary and middle school students, include information on human health and environmental impacts of mercury, with a specific focus on mercury in fish.

Media Advertising

SCVURPPP conducts significant media advertising through its Watershed Watch Campaign. Advertisements promoting safe fish consumption have been developed and placed on English and Spanish radio stations, online media, and the Watershed Watch social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter). All advertisements direct residents to the Watershed Watch website for downloading the “Guide to Eating Fish” brochures.



Online advertisement promoting the brochures

