

**Characterization of Subsistence Fishing in Monroe County**  
**Principal Investigator: Katrina Korfmacher, PhD**  
**Survey Information Letter**  
**June 2009**

**Thank you for filling out this survey. Your responses will help us develop our understanding of how many people catch and eat fish from waters around Rochester.**

This survey is part of an ongoing study of fish consumption and related outreach efforts. The study is being conducted this summer through the University of Rochester Environmental Health Sciences Center's Community Outreach and Education Core in partnership with Action for a Better Community.

There is some concern that certain groups in Rochester may be consuming more locally caught fish than is recommended by the health department. We are doing a study to find out how many people are catching and eating fish from around Rochester. If we find that many people eat more than the recommended amount of locally caught fish, we will use this information to recommend ways to improve public education about this issue.

Eating fish is very good for your health. Unfortunately, some locally caught fish can be contaminated with chemicals that are unsafe for people to eat (such as PCBs and methylmercury). Infants, children under the age of 15, and women of childbearing age are at greatest risk.

This short survey is designed to help us gather information about fish consumption. Even if you don't fish, your answers will help us understand whether the consumption advisories are known by the general community. If you do fish, your responses will help us get a sense of fishing patterns in Rochester. **Your participation in this survey is entirely optional. You may decline to participate without penalty.**

We will collect some personal information, such as your age and gender. We will not release this information to anyone else, and your responses will be confidential. We will summarize any information you give us (for example, "20% of women reported that...") or provide general descriptors to protect your identity (for example, "One 50 year old angler noted that he had been eating fish from Lake Ontario his entire life") in any publications or presentations based on this study. On the back of the survey, there is a space for contact information. Please only fill this out if you fish and do not mind being interviewed by us in the future. We will not connect it to your survey responses.

**Thank you again for your help!**

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact:

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## **Background: Fish Consumption Advisories**

Eating fish is very good for your health. Fish is lean and high in protein, and has been shown to positively influence brain development. It is also good for your heart. Unfortunately, some fish can be contaminated with chemicals that are unsafe for people to eat (such as PCBs and mercury). This is especially true for infants, children under the age of 15, and pregnant or nursing women because these chemicals affect development.

Because of this concern, fish sold in stores must follow strict guidelines for contaminant concentrations. However, some locally caught fish (not sold in stores) may contain enough contaminants to make the fish less safe for people to eat. Because of this, recommendations are made for most water bodies to guide people on how much locally caught fish is safe for them to eat. There is a general consumption advisory for all of New York State, but the advisory changes for more polluted water bodies like Lake Ontario and Irondequoit Bay. It is recommended that women who may become pregnant and children under the age of 15 do not eat fish caught in these waters. For all others, the advisory is based on species and size of the fish.

Our intent is to promote safe consumption of fish, which is very healthy for the brain and heart. Our goal is simply to provide people with all of the information they need to decide whether or not to eat the fish they catch in local waters.

**For more information on your local advisories, please visit:**

<http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/fish/>

**We are trying to learn about who eats local fish. Please help us by answering these questions.**

**1. How many meals of fish do you eat each week?** \_\_\_\_\_ meals per week

(Count any fish that was bought, including canned tuna, fish sticks, etc. – BUT NOT locally caught fish)

**2. Do you or your family regularly fish in waters around Rochester?** Yes/No

**3. Does your family regularly eat fish caught around Rochester?** Yes/No

**IF YES**, about how often did you eat locally caught fish during the last fishing season? \_\_\_\_\_ meals per week

**4. Are these statements true or false?**

Eating fish is good for your heart. True / False / Don't Know

Young women and children should not eat fish from Lake Ontario. True / False / Don't Know

No one should eat fish caught around Rochester. True / False / Don't Know

Lake Ontario fish caught farther away from Rochester are safer to eat True / False / Don't Know

The government suggests limiting how much local fish you eat. True / False / Don't Know

**5. Please tell us about yourself:**

**AGE:** \_\_\_\_\_ years **GENDER:** Male / Female

**RACE:** Hispanic / African American / White / Native American / Asian / Bi- or multi-racial / Other

**What communities/groups do you belong to?** \_\_\_\_\_

(Neighborhood, church, ethnic group, etc.)

**What zip code do you live in?** \_\_\_\_\_

