

Great Lakes fish contaminants on the decrease



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I am sure many members have seen the recent articles that have appeared in the Detroit Free Press on Great Lakes fish consumption.

The writer of the article is Eric Sharp and he does a great disservice to the fishing industry in Michigan. In his first paragraph, he opens with, "The fish in many of Michigan's Great Lakes and inland waters are so laden with PCBs, mercury, dioxins and other chemical toxins that they shouldn't be eaten by children or women of child bearing age. And some fish from some of our waters shouldn't be eaten by anyone of any age."

He moves through the article with sweeping generalizations and finishes with a scare that eating fish causes cancer and that if you choose to eat fish eat it at your own risk but don't let children eat it at all. Then in his informational blurb at the bottom he asks for you to purchase

his fishing book for \$15. A little ironic.

The board discussed this article and wanted to meet with our wildlife biologist to find out the truth. Mr. Eric Clark presented the board with a report: overview of data used by Michigan Division of Environmental Health to set the 2011-2012 fish consumption advisory. This report was written by Mark P. Ebener, Fishery Assessment Program, Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority. It was released May 31, 2012. It is a 15-page report on exactly the same information provided by the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) on fish contamination.

This report shows contamination has generally decreased over the years and most fish are safe to

consume on a regular basis from the Great Lakes treaty areas for all adults and children. Although I do agree that fish in some of the waters around Detroit and large cities in lower Michigan and in Lake Erie have larger concentrations of contaminants, it is wrong to say that Great Lakes fish in general are unfit to eat. That is factually incorrect.

Mr. Ebener summarizes at the end of the report that a similar sampling took place on the same contaminants in dairy products, meat and fish, poultry, eggs and animal fats. It does state that freshwater fish (the sampling was taken from all over the country) had the highest concentration of dioxins (1.43 EQI), followed by butter (1.07 EQI), hot dogs (.54 EQI), ocean fish (.47 EQI), pork

(.32 EQI) and milk (.12 EQI). So it shows that all food has dioxins in it and that some foods we consume daily actually accumulate dioxins faster in our systems, but MDCH only issue consumption warnings on fish. I wonder why? If anyone wants the report or wants any more information please contact the tribal natural resource department or myself.

The election is over and the new chairman and board are seated. I congratulate all on their hard fought election campaigns and look forward to working together for the betterment of the tribe. Thank you again for the calls and the e-mails. Keith Massaway, 702 Hazelton St., St. Ignace, MI 49781, (906) 643-6981, kmassaway@msn.com.