

**A Pilot Program for Monitoring, Stakeholder Involvement, and Risk Communication
Relating to Mercury in Fish in the Bay-Delta Watershed
(aka “The Fish Mercury Project”)**

Lead Agency: San Francisco Estuary Institute
Grant Number: ERP-02D-067

About the Project:

The Fish Mercury Project (FMP) embraced a multi-disciplinary, “integrated monitoring” and outreach program approach to evaluate fish contamination issues in the Bay-Delta watershed. Project scientists coined the term “integrated monitoring” to describe the FMP’s sport fish monitoring effort that consisted of monitoring mercury levels in fish, developing consumption advice, and communicating risk to the communities most affected by the fish contamination.

The project monitored mercury levels in sport fish and biosentinel indicators for three years throughout the watershed. The monitoring evaluated spatio-temporal variability, gathered information needed for fish consumption advisories, and developed baseline data at sites for potential habitat restoration sites or mine cleanup sites. The project utilized a diverse steering committee, which included including agencies, community stakeholders, and environmental justice advocates, that provided input on project design and products. Key products from the monitoring data collected through the FMP came from the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment which developed fish consumption advisories and the Department of Health Services which provided outreach and education to communities on how to reduce risk.

Primary Project Goals and Accomplishments:

- ❖ Protect human health by assessing and reducing exposure to methylmercury-contaminated fish through risk communication
- ❖ Provide "performance measures" to gauge methylmercury contamination of the watershed during restoration and remediation
- ❖ Establish an organizational and technical foundation for cost-effective, scientifically defensible monitoring of mercury in the watershed that meets the identified needs of end users and is coordinated with related science and management efforts
- ❖ Collaborative monitoring program established that included agency and community stakeholders
- ❖ Risk communication outreach to affected communities via education grants stressed benefits and risks
- ❖ Monitoring data contributed to information used to produce new and update existing Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment fish consumption advisories

Partners:

The Fish Mercury Project’s partners included the San Francisco Estuary Institute, Department of Fish and Game, Department of Health Services, Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, and University of California, Davis.