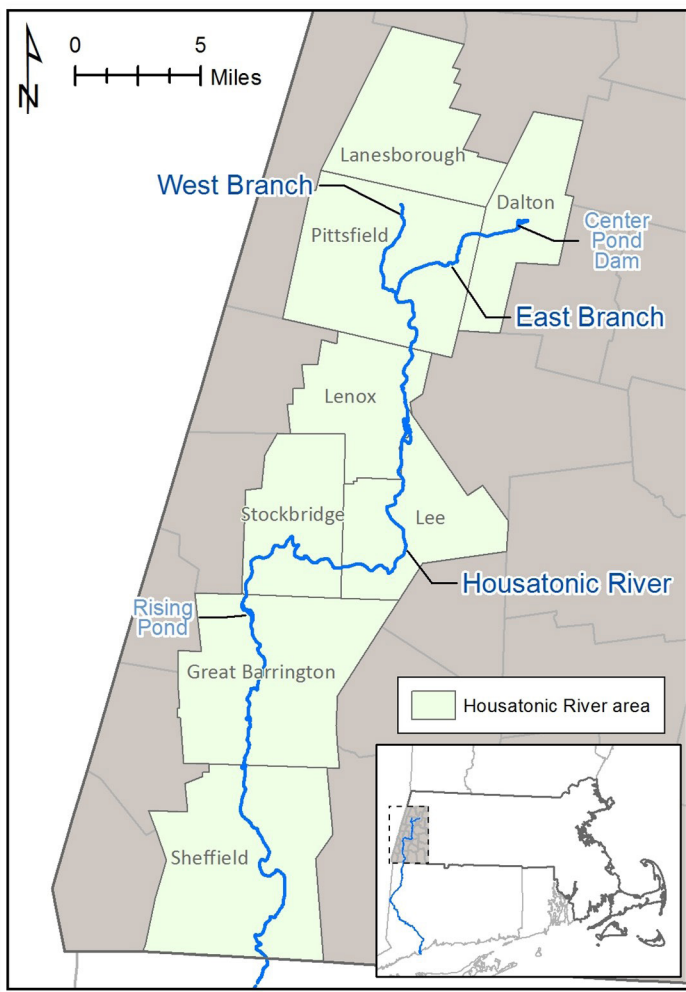


# Advice for Eating Fish and Waterfowl from the Housatonic River Area in Massachusetts



**Do NOT eat:** Fish, frogs, and turtles from the Housatonic River and tributaries that feed into the main river from Center Pond Dam in Dalton to the Connecticut border.

**Do NOT eat:** Mallards and wood ducks from the Housatonic River and its impoundments from Pittsfield south to Rising Pond in Great Barrington.



## Information about the Housatonic River area

The Housatonic River area is made up of eight communities in Berkshire County: Lanesborough, Dalton, Pittsfield, Lenox, Stockbridge, Lee, Great Barrington, and Sheffield. There are three main branches of the Housatonic River—the East Branch, West Branch, and Southwest Branch—that combine to make up the main stem of the Housatonic River. The Housatonic River flows south from Pittsfield into Connecticut.

Due to releases of chemicals by the General Electric Company from the early 1930s through the late 1970s, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are present in soils, sediment, fish, and certain waterfowl in and around the Housatonic River area. PCBs do not break down easily in the environment.

While portions of the Housatonic River area have been cleaned up, PCBs may be present in fish and waterfowl at levels that could be harmful if eaten. For more information on the Housatonic River clean-up, visit [EPA Cleanups: GE-Pittsfield/Housatonic River Site](https://www.epa.gov/cleanups/ge-pittsfield/housatonic-river-site).

## Effects of PCBs on health

- PCBs are suspected of causing liver problems, skin lesions or irritations, and some types of cancer
- Children are especially sensitive to PCBs, especially during fetal development, nursing, and early growth. Exposure to small amounts of these chemicals may interfere with brain development even before birth.

## Fish and waterfowl in the Housatonic River

Fish and waterfowl in the area may be exposed to PCBs. PCBs are a group of man-made organic chemicals banned in the 1970s. PCBs can still be found in our environment and can get into our food due to their widespread use. PCBs can enter fish's bodies and concentrate in their skin, fat, internal organs and sometimes muscles. Larger species feed on smaller species. This causes PCB concentrations to be higher in larger, older fish. PCBs in sediments are also a concern for other aquatic species (e.g., ducks, frogs, turtles).

### How plants and animals are exposed to contaminants

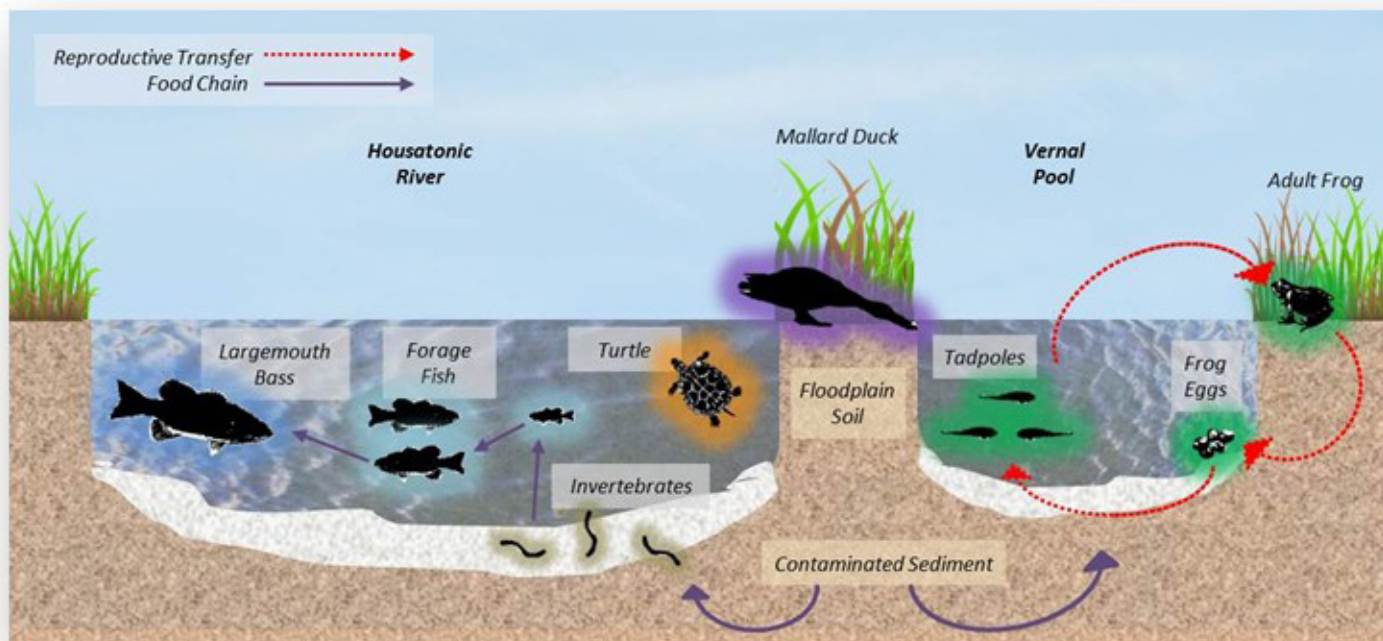


Image adapted from the EPA Housatonic River Ecological Risk Assessment Fact Sheet: [Ecological Risk Assessment \(ERA\) fact sheet for the GE/Housatonic River, Rest of River](#)

## Tips for fishing in the Housatonic River and its tributaries

- Observe posted warning signs and follow their advice
- Do not eat fish from the Housatonic River and its tributaries
- When fishing, release fish unharmed back into the river
- Follow the State-wide Fish Consumption Advisory for other lakes, rivers, and ponds in the Housatonic River area in Massachusetts. More specific consumption advice is available for certain bodies of water that have been tested at [Massachusetts fish consumption advisories](#).



## General state-wide advice for eating fish caught in Massachusetts

The following is advised for pregnant women, women who may become pregnant, nursing mothers, and children under 12 years old:

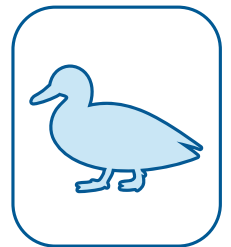
- **Do Not Eat:** Freshwater fish caught in streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds in Massachusetts
- **Safe to Eat:** Fish that are stocked in streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds in Massachusetts



## General state-wide advice for eating waterfowl caught in Massachusetts

Safe Guidelines for Eating Wild Waterfowl from areas other than the Housatonic River area:

- Skin and remove all fat before cooking
- Discard stuffing after cooking
- Drippings should not be used for gravy
- Eat waterfowl in moderation (no more than 2 meals per month)



## Fish is good for you!

Continue to eat a variety of fish from safe sources. Fish is low in saturated fat, high in protein, and helps to prevent heart disease.

## For more information

- To choose fish and waterfowl that are safe to eat, please contact the [DPH Bureau of Climate and Environmental Health](#) at 617-624-5757 or 800-240-4266
- To learn more about stocked fish, please contact the MassWildlife Western District office, Dalton. Tel: (413) 684-1646 or visit [the Massachusetts trout stocking report for current stocking locations and updates](#). For fishing regulations visit [Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife](#).
- To learn more about the federal government's additional advice for safe fish consumption, please visit [FDA Advice about Eating Fish](#) and [EPA Choose Fish and Shellfish Wisely](#).

