

# Recreational Use of the Neponset River

## Community Fact Sheet 2022

On March 16, 2022, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) listed the Lower Neponset River on the National Priorities List (NPL). This means that certain activities, like eating fish caught in the river, may not be safe for certain people. For more information visit: [epa.gov/superfund/lowerneponset](https://www.epa.gov/superfund/lowerneponset).

### Can I fish in the Neponset River?

Anyone can **catch** fish, but not everyone should **eat** the fish. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) has specific advice about who can safely eat the fish that is caught from the Neponset River.

### Why can't I eat fish caught in the Neponset River?

Eating freshwater fish that you catch from the Neponset River may be harmful because of chemicals in the fish. It is important to follow the information below for:

- the stretch of Neponset River between the Hollingsworth & Vose Dam in Walpole and the Walter Baker Dam in the Dorchester/Milton Lower Mills Industrial Complex
- the Mother Brook between the Knight Street dam and the Neponset River.




**Children under 12, pregnant women, nursing mothers, and women that may become pregnant should NOT eat any fish caught from these areas.** Chemicals in these fish can harm a developing fetus, infants, and young children. These groups may be at higher risk than other people of being harmed.

### All other people should:

- **NOT Eat any American Eel or White Sucker fish from this area.** These types of fish have high amounts of chemicals that are not safe for anyone to eat.
- **LIMIT Eating all other freshwater fish from this area to no more than two meals per month.** Other freshwater fish from the Neponset River have lower amounts of chemicals than the American Eel or White Sucker, but they still should not be consumed more than twice a month.

**Fish Meal Size**



**8 oz.**

**4 oz.**

An adult's uncooked meal size is about 8 ounces (the size of an adult's hand)

A child's uncooked meal size is about 4 ounces (the size of an adult's palm)

### **What chemicals are found in freshwater fish from the Neponset River?**

Chemicals such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) have been found in fish caught from the Neponset River. These chemicals settle into waterbodies from industrial or agricultural sources. Fish then swallow the chemicals that are in the water and mud at the bottom of the river. These chemicals can stay inside the fish and build up inside their muscle or fat over time. When people eat the fish, they swallow those chemicals.

### **Who is most sensitive to these chemicals?**

The developing fetus, infants, and young children may be at higher risk than other people of being harmed from chemicals in fish. Exposure to small amounts of PCBs may interfere with brain development before birth. This is why there is different advice about eating fish for these groups.

### **Are there other places along the Neponset River or in Massachusetts where I can catch fish that are safe to eat?**

There are many good places to catch and eat fish throughout Massachusetts. This includes the saltwater portion of the Neponset River known as the Neponset River Estuary.

To find out if fish from other water bodies are safe to eat, you can look up the lake, river, stream, or pond in the Massachusetts Freshwater Fish Consumption Advisory Database: [mass.gov/DPH/FishAdvisories](http://mass.gov/DPH/FishAdvisories).

### **General State-wide Advice for eating fish caught in Massachusetts**

It is also important to follow the advice on warning signs posted at contaminated waterbodies. 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

For a list of waterbodies that are stocked with trout contact the Mass Wildlife office at (508) 389-6300 or visit [www.mass.gov/trout](http://www.mass.gov/trout).

## **Fish is a great source of nutrients and is good for your health!**

- ✓ *Continue to eat fish from other waterbodies that don't have fish advisories, as well as store-bought fish*
- ✓ *Choose to eat several different kinds of fish and seafood*



## How can I safely use the Lower Neponset River?



**It is safe to use the Lower Neponset River for activities such as walking, biking, boating, rowing, kayaking, and visiting parks/playgrounds.**

These types of activities are considered safe because it is unlikely that you will come in close or prolonged contact with contaminated water, soil, or mud at the bottom of the river during these types of activities.



**It is also safe to go fishing and release fish unharmed back into the river.**

## Do Not Swim or Wade in the Lower Neponset River.



Sometimes when people are swimming, they accidentally swallow small amounts of water, and the water in the Lower Neponset River may be contaminated with chemicals that can be harmful to your health. It may also contain high levels of harmful bacteria, especially after storms with a lot of rainfall. These bacteria can make people sick if they are swallowed.



While swimming and wading, people may also contact the soil and the mud at the bottom of the river or along the riverbank. This could be harmful because the mud in some stretches of the Lower Neponset River has high levels of chemicals. Soil in some areas along the river may also be contaminated with chemicals.

## Steps to minimize potential exposure to chemicals in soil in the Lower Neponset River:

- Wear shoes so that your feet don't touch areas with mud or bare soil
- Clean off mud/soil from shoes prior to leaving the river area to prevent bringing mud or soil into the car or home
- Wash feet if they contact mud or bare soil
- Wash hands after touching the mud or soil, especially before eating so you don't accidentally swallow the mud or soil
- Avoid sitting or playing in bare soil or mud along the riverbank
- Monitor young children to prevent swallowing mud or soil
- Keep dogs leashed and away from the river and muddy areas of the riverbank

## What if I contact water from the Lower Neponset River while boating or fishing?

Touching the water while boating, rowing, kayaking, or fishing is not likely to harm your health. The amount of chemicals in river water is expected to be less than the amount in fish or mud at the bottom of the river. Also, the amount of chemicals that you may be exposed to from touching the water is much less than the amount you may be exposed to from accidentally swallowing water while swimming. Although there may be bacteria in the water, bacteria are most harmful if swallowed. Simply washing your hands after touching the water will reduce the chance that bacteria will be swallowed or remain in open wounds on your skin.

## SOURCES OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry – Region 1

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### LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

#### Boston Public Health Commission

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#### Neponset River Watershed Association

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For more information visit:

[epa.gov/superfund/lowerneponset](http://epa.gov/superfund/lowerneponset)

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