Thirty million U.S. residents fish recreationally, yet many may be unaware that some of the fish they catch are not safe to eat. Recreational fishing is regulated broadly at the state level by two types of state agencies. One agency (usually a fish and game agency) oversees recreational fishing as a natural resource and for tourism. The other type of agency (usually a health department) oversees the testing and reporting of chemicals such as mercury or PCBs in fish from local streams, lakes, and estuaries.

All 50 states issue some type of fish catch regulation and fish consumption advisory. Catch regulations (such as bag limits or size limits) are issued in fishing guide magazines, on fish and game agency websites, and are often posted at fishing sites. Consumption advisories are often posted at fishing sites and may be listed on agency websites. There is a great opportunity for these two types of agencies to coordinate catch regulations and consumption advisories.
**Key Findings**

- In 2010, over 1,000 consumption advisories were issued by health departments in the U.S.
- Many states send mixed messages about which fish are permissible to catch and which are safe to eat.
- More than half of states’ fish and game agencies did not report detailed fish consumption advisories in their fishing guide magazines.
- Only three state agencies (in Georgia, Missouri, and New Mexico) listed catch regulations for their state within consumption advisory documents.

**Public Health Concerns**

- Recreational fishers consume twice the national average of seafood, thereby increasing their exposure to seafood contaminants.
- The EPA has found that many bodies of water contain fish with harmful levels of mercury, pesticides such as DDT and mirex, or industrial chemicals like PCBs and dioxins.
- Recreational fish consumption advisories are the best means of informing recreational fishers about the safety of eating the fish they catch.

**Research Summary**

Researchers at the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future reviewed statewide data from 50 state fish and game agencies and health departments to discover which fish species were listed with advisories. The researchers then analyzed the data and made recommendations on more coordinated reporting among agencies to protect the health of recreational fishers.

**Strategies for Action**

- Fish and game agencies and health departments should work together to coordinate catch regulations and consumption advisories for particular water bodies.
- The EPA National Listing of Fish Advisories should also include information about fish catch regulations listed for all water bodies with fish consumption advisories.

**Full Title:**
State-Level Recreational Fishing Regulations and Fish Consumption Advisories in the United States: Identifying Opportunities for Improved Interagency Collaboration

**Abstract available at:**
journals.lww.com/jphmp/Abstract/publishahead/State_Level_Recreational_Fishing_Regulations_and.99943.aspx