

## Public comment sought in Caves Monument management

Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve is inviting public comment on a proposal to prepare a management plan for the newly designated national preserve, as well as a related wild and scenic river study for five creeks in the monument and preserve.

During this scooping period, the public is invited to identify any issues or concerns they might have with the proposed action so that the NPS can appropriately consider them in the preparation of an environmental assessment.

**Open House**  
**Tuesday, May 3**  
**6 - 8 p.m.**  
**Cave Junction**  
**County Building**  
**102 South Redwood Hwy**  
**Cave Junction OR 9752**

## Elevated mercury levels found in fish tissue from many state water bodies

The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) is issuing a statewide advisory for bass due to elevated levels of mercury found in fish tissue sampled from a number of water bodies across the state.

The fish consumption advisory affects bass in all water bodies statewide, including river systems. "Fish are an important part of a healthy diet, especially migratory fish like salmon, steelhead and trout," said Dave Farrer, Ph.D., toxicologist in the Environmental Public Health Section at the OHA Public Health Division. "The elevated mercury levels we're talking about in bass are of concern to us, but there are some simple steps people can take to reduce their exposure to mercury when consuming bass."

Bass is the focus of the advisory because it is a resident species--it lives in one place its entire life--and is considered a top predator, eating other mercury-contaminated fish within an ecosystem. The longer bass live, the more mercury they accumulate. In addition, bass are found across the state in many popular fishing waters, and the amount of data the state has for this species is adequate to warrant a statewide advisory.

OHA recommends the following monthly meal allowances for bass from all water bodies across the state, including river systems:

\* General population-- Limit consumption to no more than six meals per month.

\* At-risk populations-- Limit consumption to no more than two meals per month.

Mercury was found at levels above established screening values. This means it is high enough to be of concern to human health if fish contaminated with mercury are not eaten in moderation. For reference, the screening values used by OHA when determining if the concentration of mercury found in fish tissue is a health risk are 0.2 mg/kg for at-risk populations (infants, children, and pregnant or breastfeeding women), and 0.6 mg/kg for the general public. Average total concentrations found in fish tissue from across the state ranged from 0.08 mg/kg to 0.86 mg/kg of mercury.

Tissue samples were taken from 62 bass from 11 water bodies across the state, including eight rivers, two reservoirs and one lake covering each region of the state, from 2008 through 2014.

The statewide advisory and recommended meal allowances cover those water bodies that do not currently have an individual advisory in place for resident fish, including bass. For a list of water bodies with an existing advisory, see the advisory table at [HealthOregon.org/fishadv](http://HealthOregon.org/fishadv). People should follow the recommended meal allowances for fish from these individual water bodies, rather than the statewide meal allowance of six and two.

A meal is about the size and thickness of your hand; for children, a meal is about the size and thickness of a

child's hand.

People who eat too much fish contaminated with mercury can suffer negative health effects over time, such as damage to organs, the nervous system and reproductive system. Fetuses, babies and small children are most vulnerable to the health effects of mercury and, if exposed to high levels, can suffer life-long learning and behavior problems. For this reason, OHA recommends that pregnant and nursing women, and women of childbearing age (18 to 45), follow the consumption recommendations closely. Anglers also should not give bass to others unless the recipients are aware of the mercury contamination issue and they understand the recommendations in the fish advisory.

Fish consumption advisories are issued when fish tissue data collected and analyzed verifies that a particular contaminant is over Oregon's established screening value for that contaminant. OHA has several advisories currently in place for mercury in resident fish including bass, although fish tissue in many water bodies has not been sampled and analyzed.

Because data for mercury in fish tissue is available for some, but not all, lakes across the state, and because environmental conditions are such that mercury is present in recreational waters and can accumulate in the fish that live there, OHA believes it is necessary to issue a statewide

advisory to protect public health.

Issuing a statewide advisory helps prevent confusion and reduces the public's exposure to mercury when consuming bass from non-monitored water bodies.

The advisory is expected to remain in place for the foreseeable future because mercury can come from both natural and human-made sources, and is transported globally through air pollution. The monthly meal allowances represent the most consistent health protective recommendations possible based on available fish tissue data. Should more mercury data become available, OHA will evaluate those data and update this and other advisories as practical and necessary.

By issuing the advisory, health officials hope to increase the public's awareness of fish species they should avoid or limit consumption of, and those they can keep eating. While it is important for people to know about contaminants in fish, it is equally important to keep fish on the table. ealth officials continue to encourage people, including pregnant women, to eat a variety of fish as part of a healthy diet. Migratory fish such as salmon and steelhead are an essential source of protein, omega-3 fatty acids and other nutrients, and are low in contaminants.

Visit [HealthOregon.org/fishadv](http://HealthOregon.org/fishadv) to learn more about why fish is good for you, and for other fish-related topics.

## Tax day, America's most wonderful day?

by Glenn Mollette

It's that most wonderful day of the year! Come on sing it! Hmmm, I don't hear any pages turning in the hymnals to this grand old song. Actually, it's not in any hymnals and if you are like most Americans you do not want to sing April 18. Normally, it's April 15. However, this year Emancipation Day is celebrated April 15. This is why the deadline has been pushed up.

If you are pleased with sending the government more money, you can hardly wait for Monday to put it in the mail. You've heard about the new tax filing form the government is working on haven't you? There are only two lines to complete. Line number one is, "How much did you make?" Line number two says, "Send it."

I have to admit this is one part of the Ted Cruz platform that I like. It resonates with me when he gets to that part of his speech where he says, "We will abolish the IRS and enact a simple flat tax."

I work hard and try to make a

living. I am grateful that I am not on disabled Social Security or food stamps. Understandably, some Americans are rightly on government assistance and I am happy we can do this for these hurting people. I'm glad I am healthy enough to work every day. The more I work the more I make and the harder I work the luckier I get. However, the more I work the more I get to send to the government. If I make extra I not only get to send more to the government, then the percentage of what I send becomes higher. Why do we penalize Americans for working harder? Why do we penalize citizens for trying to make a few extra dollars?

I'm for a flat tax. Give the government 10 percent and be done with it. After all, according to the Bible, God only wants 10 percent. Why should we have to pay the government more than God?

I understand we must take care of our military, roads and bridges, Social Security retirements, Medicare and of

course there are the salaries of all the government workers, including IRS salaries. By the way, it takes billions to keep our government workers and IRS retirees' pensions and benefits going. This means the government is hungry, hungry, hungry for more and more and more of your money.

Wake up America! Demand that your congressional representatives simplify the tax code by burning it and starting over. Let's enact a flat tax rate. Most of us could live with a 15 percent rate. However, there must be a major change in what we are allowing our government to do to us every year by sticking it to us with more and more taxes.

*Glenn Mollette is an American Syndicated Columnist and Author. He is the author of 11 books and read in all 50 states. Enjoy books by Glenn Mollette at Amazon.com*

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