



Update for People Harvesting Blue Crabs in the St. Johns River near Green Cove Springs

Summary of Florida Department of Health Report: PCBs in Blue Crabs from the St. Johns River Not a Health Risk

TALLAHASSEE, FL – The sultry days of summer often feature meals of seafood. A big hit for such feasts are blue crabs.

One place people catch them for eating is in the St. John's River near Green Cove Springs. From the 1940s to the 1960s, the U.S. Navy used the former Lee Field Pier Area in that part of the river to dock, maintain, and repair over 600 inactive vessels. Disposal of electric transformer fluid and filters, however, polluted the river's sediments with polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs).

Because PCBs can build up in blue crabs the Florida Department of Health asked the Florida Wildlife Conservation Commission to catch some in the St. Johns River. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection tested the crabs. The Florida Department of Health found that the levels of PCBs in the blue crabs caught near Green Cove Springs were not likely to harm human health.

PCBs were mostly in the crabs' hepatopancreas. Some people eat this part of the crab, also known as "tomalley" or "crab mustard." Levels of PCBs in the tomalley are not high enough to harm people who eat them one or two times per week for many years.

The Department of Health just released a report assessing the health risk from eating these crabs. You can read it online by searching "hazwaste.floridahealth.gov." In addition, you can get a copy by calling toll-free at 1-877-798-2772, by emailing at PHToxicology@FLHealth.gov or by writing:

Public Health Toxicology
Florida Department of Health
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The Florida Department of Health works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.