

# 2009 LOWER YARRA RIVER FISH STUDY

The 2009 Lower Yarra River Fish Study begins on 12 January 2009. The study will check if the levels of contaminants in fish from the lower Yarra River have significantly changed since the last study in 2006. This includes the period when contaminated sediment was dredged from the Yarra River in 2008.

Contaminants include metals such as copper, arsenic and mercury and organic chemicals such as pesticides and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

The 2009 study is not the first time fish from the lower Yarra River have been tested for contaminants. Studies also occurred in 2005 and 2006 and a fourth study is planned for 2011.

For 2005 and 2006 results see [http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/water/rivers/fish\\_sampling.asp](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/water/rivers/fish_sampling.asp).

EPA Victoria will conduct the study. It is one of nine Baywide Monitoring Programs for the Channel Deepening Project. Results are scheduled to be publicly available in May 2009.

## How will the study be carried out?

The 2009 Lower Yarra River Fish Study has four steps:

1. Sampling to collect the fish
2. Preparing fish for the laboratory
3. Analysing the fish
4. Reporting the results



EPA Victoria field staff collecting fish caught from sampling nets



Black Bream will be tested for contaminants

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**Step one** involves catching 60 Black Bream and 60 Yellow-eye Mullet from the lower Yarra River. These fish species are regularly caught by recreational anglers in this area.

Sampling begins on 12 January 2009 and is scheduled to end by 9 February 2009.

To catch the fish, specially-designed nets will be set in the Warmies near the mouth of the Yarra River and upstream at South Wharf in the Docklands. A third area, in the lower Maribyrnong River may be included if not enough fish are caught at the other two sample areas.

**Step two** involves filleting the fish. Skinless fillets are stored on ice and sent to the laboratories for analysis.

**Step three** involves testing the fish fillets for the same contaminants tested in the 2006 study including heavy metals such as copper, arsenic and mercury, and organic chemicals including pesticides and PCBs. Testing for contaminants is scheduled to take up to six weeks.

**Step four** involves comparing the 2009 results with the 2006 results.

The results will be reviewed by an independent group of experts. The review findings will be provided to the Victorian regulator of the Channel Deepening Project, the Secretary Department of Sustainability and Environment.

If the report shows the contaminant levels in fish are unchanged, the current fish consumption health advisory provided by the Department of Human Services will remain. To view this advisory visit [http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/downloads/eat\\_fish.pdf](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/downloads/eat_fish.pdf).

If the report shows the contaminant levels in fish have significantly changed since 2006, the results will be considered by the Department of Human Services.

Results are scheduled to be publicly available in May 2009.

### For more information

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