

The Delta Tributaries Mercury Council (DTMC)

A Forum for Outreach, Education, and Exchange of Knowledge on Mercury in the Bay-Delta Watershed

Concerns about mercury stem from the potential toxic effects of methylmercury to humans and wildlife. Exposure to methylmercury comes largely from eating fish and shellfish that have accumulated methylmercury from the food that they eat. Methylmercury is linked to developmental problems in fetuses and children and to nervous system effects in adults. Similar affects have been seen in wildlife.

Mercury occurs naturally within the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta watershed and enters waterways predominately from native soil erosion, atmospheric deposition and geothermal springs. In addition, cinnabar ore was mined in the Coast Ranges and processed to obtain elemental mercury. This liquid form was transported to the Sierra Nevada where it was used extensively in gold mining activities. Contaminated mine sites and downstream waterways are a legacy source of mercury in the area. Municipal stormwater runoff and wastewater contain mercury from various consumer products and dental amalgams, respectively.

The **Delta Tributaries Mercury Council (DTMC)** is a stakeholder group that formed in 1998 under the Sacramento River Watershed Program to provide a forum for the presentation and discussion of mercury issues. The mission of the DTMC is to bring together scientists, regulators, resource managers, water purveyors and interested citizens to develop and collaboratively implement mercury management projects in the Delta watershed and to monitor its effectiveness.

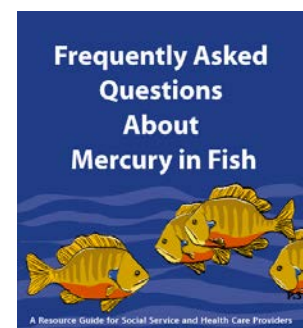
Recent DTMC accomplishments include:



Sustained a regional network for cooperation and information exchange on mercury research and monitoring. The DTMC meets quarterly. Agendas are structured to focus on relevant and emerging issues. The format features a balance of presentations from invited speakers and group discussion to further the collective knowledge on mercury. While regionally oriented, the DTMC stays up-to-date on statewide and national mercury issues and findings.

Partnered with the California Department of Public Health to:

- Develop a resource guide about mercury in fish for county staffs and other information providers.
- Conduct community-based outreach and education about fish advisories.
- Produce educational materials for consumers about mercury in fish including recommended safe-fish-consumption levels.
- Develop a training manual for communities to use in educating themselves on this important health matter.



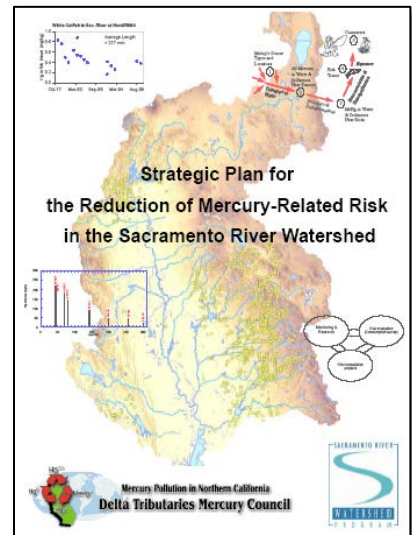
Supported research that:



- Studied how mercury transforms in the environment and resulted in scientific, peer-reviewed, journal articles.
- Consolidated information and laid the groundwork for the design and implementation of a comprehensive, regional fish consumption study and development of a geographic information system and relational database for fish tissue mercury and creel survey data.

Developed a Strategic Plan for the Reduction of Mercury-Related Risk in the Sacramento River Watershed (2002)

- Identified appropriate areas for **pilot remediation projects**,
- Developed a conceptual **model** to quantify inorganic and methyl mercury loads by tributary and source type.
- Summarized current **research** findings.
- Prioritized and scheduled **next steps**, including research needs, outreach messages, modeling projects, and legislation to collect additional fish consumption information and to inform and educate affected people regarding mercury risks
- Continuously **planned and evaluated progress**



To implement stakeholder-driven projects, the DTMC can help with funding, designing, implementing and reviewing projects that:

- Investigate mercury methylation and loading.
- Expand the information base about mercury behavior within the Delta and its tributaries.
- Provide mercury outreach and education activities targeting at-risk populations.
- Participate or lead discussions on mercury policy and regulations.

To learn more about the DTMC, go to <http://www.sacriver.org/aboutwatershed/mercury/dtmc> or contact the facilitator Stephen McCord at sam@mccenv.com or 530-220-3165. Useful links:

- <http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish/hg/index.html>
- <http://www.bemercuryfree.org>
- <http://mercury.mlml.calstate.edu/>
- <http://ca.water.usgs.gov/mercury/>
- http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/tmdl/central_valley_projects/delta_hg/index.shtml
- <http://www.sfei.org/cmr/fishmercury/>