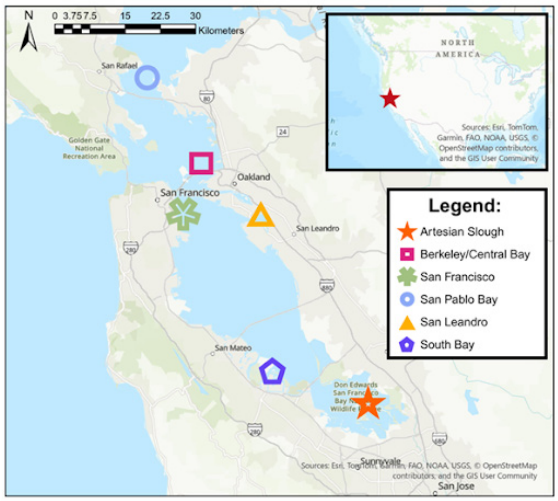
RMP REGIONAL MONITORING PROGRAM FOR WATER QUALITY IN SAN FRANCISCO BAY
sfei.org/rmp

Plain Language Summary

Microplastics in San Francisco Bay Fish

Microplastic fragments about the size of fine grains of sand are widespread in San Francisco Bay. They can travel up the food chain, including in fish that people eat. In 2024, the RMP caught 25 striped bass and 36 shiner surfperch from the Bay and examined their fillets, livers, and guts for microplastics. This is the **first San Francisco Bay dataset** on microplastics in fish that people eat.





California **already recommends limiting consumption of striped bass and avoiding all shiner surfperch in San Francisco Bay** based on the levels of other contaminants. Learn more: **oehha.ca.gov/fish/advisories/san-francisco-bay**



Key Findings

- All striped bass fillets tested contained microplastics, as well as 75% of shiner surfperch.
- Striped bass contained **four microplastic particles per fillet** on average. Researchers didn't find differences in microplastic levels related to fish size or location in the Bay.
- Whole shiner surfperch, including fillets, liver, and guts, contained **nine microplastics per fish** on average. They contained **ten times more microplastics per gram** than striped bass fillets.

Implications and Future Directions

Eating fish from the Bay can expose people to microplastics. However, per serving, the amount of microplastics ingested from eating Bay fish is likely low compared to other food or beverage sources. More studies are needed to understand whether microplastics in food and water pose a risk to human health. The RMP is also monitoring microplastics in Bay water, sediment, and stormwater.

Full study: Madeleine H. Milne, Diana Lin, Jay Davis, Ezra Miller, Martin Trinh, Chelsea M. Rochman; Microplastics Are Prevalent in Striped Bass and Shiner Surfperch Tissues across San Francisco Bay, California. *Environ. Sci. Technol.* 2026; https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.est.6c08811