



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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ADPH issues fish consumption advisories for 2004

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tissue monitoring from fish collected from various waterbodies throughout the state during the fall of 2003 indicates that the quality of water in Alabama generally has improved over the past years, even though additional fish consumption advisories are being issued.

New fish advisories issued this year include a **Limited Consumption Advisory** for largemouth bass from Bear Creek Reservoir, and **No Consumption Advisories** for largemouth bass from the Bon Secour and Perdido rivers and separate listings for the Blackwater River in Baldwin and Escambia counties.

These additions are due to mercury levels in excess of Food and Drug Administration advisory levels. Additionally, the previous **Limited Consumption Advisory** for largemouth bass from the Mobile River at the confluence of Cold Creek Swamp is being elevated to a **No Consumption Advisory**.

A **Limited Consumption Advisory** was removed for catfish over one pound taken from the Coosa River between the Alabama/Georgia State Line and Weiss Dam because the fish collected from Weiss Reservoir have tested below FDA consumption advisory levels for polychlorinated biphenyls, PCBs, for a sufficient number of years to permit removal. This same applies to the lifting of **No Consumption Advisory** on Bay Minette Creek. Mercury levels in fish taken from these waters have been sufficiently low to permit removal of the advisory. All other advisories that were in place throughout the state in previous years remain.

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management collected fish from various waterbodies in the state last fall. These fish were analyzed for 21 different materials including contaminants in the water (PCBs, including dioxins), pesticides (endosulfan, hexachlorobenzene, chlordane, lindane, dieldrin, endrin, DDT and its breakdown products and congeners, heptachlors, Mirex, chlorpyrifos, and toxaphene), and heavy metals (arsenic, cadmium, mercury and selenium) to which the fish may have been exposed.

Fish were also examined for body appearance, lipid content, age and weight. The Alabama Department of Public Health reviewed the results from these analyses and made a determination of the possible risk to which individuals might be exposed after consuming fish that contained any of these potentially harmful materials. These advisories are issued because toxic chemicals in lakes or rivers accumulate in fish tissue, and the people who eat these fish may face health risks from the chemicals.

Fish are good indicators of the health of a waterbody. Some contaminants, if present, could bioaccumulate in fish. The contaminant could enter the food supply through either crustaceans or bottom feeding fish in a given area. These species would be eaten by larger or more aggressive species, thereby transferring the contaminant from the species consumed to the consumer.

When individuals catch fish for their own consumption, they would then ingest those contaminants present in the fish they were eating. Safety levels recommended by FDA have been used by the health department as guides to levels of specific contaminants that might be consumed without incurring an excessive risk from exposure to the contaminant.

The advice contained in this release and in the posted fish consumption advisories (<http://www.adph.org>) is offered as guidance to individuals who wish to consume fish they catch from various waterbodies throughout the state. No regulations ban the consumption of any of the fish caught within the state, nor is there a risk of an acute toxic episode that could result from consuming any of the fish containing the contaminants for which the state has conducted analyses.

Fish were sampled from a number of waterbodies within the state that had not been sampled recently, or at any time. No or very low detectable levels of contaminants were found to have bioaccumulated in bass or catfish from the Cahaba River, Conecuh River, Dog River and the Cedar Creek, Guntersville and Little Bear Creek reservoirs.

Most sites on the Mobile River and Mobile Bay, with the exception of that area at River Mile 27.0 (confluence of the Mobile River with the outflow from Cold Creek Swamp), showed no signs of contaminant levels in fish collected that indicated the potential for any public health concern. Similar results were recorded in samples collected from various collection stations on the Tombigbee River, Murder Creek, Negro Lake and the Pickwick, Wheeler, Wilson and Weiss reservoirs. These fish, upon testing showed no levels of bioaccumulation of contaminants that exceeded FDA guidelines for safety.

During this sampling cycle, ADEM also sampled fish from below bleach kraft paper plants. Generally, if dioxins or furans, byproducts of the processes by which these types of paper are manufactured, were to be produced and released into surrounding waters, fish in these areas would tend to bioaccumulate them.

Bass and catfish sampled from sites below discharges from these mills located on the Tombigbee and Alabama rivers showed no accumulations of these contaminants. This is a further indication of the positive effect on the environment that has occurred since paper mills adopted procedures to reduce/eliminate the production of dioxins or furans in the formulation of paper pulp.

Some waterbodies on which advisories had been previously issued were retested during this year's sampling cycle. Without information showing that fish from these areas have reduced levels of contaminants as compared to the levels at the time the advisory was issued, ADPH cannot withdraw an advisory or lower its classification (from no consumption to limited consumption) without compromising safety.

A **No Consumption Advisory** issued for any species is interpreted to mean that the fish sampled have been analyzed to show the presence of a contaminant in excess of FDA advisory levels. Consumption of any fish of this type from a specific waterbody may place the consumer at risk for harm from the contaminant. If an advisory had been issued for largemouth bass and not for channel catfish or black crappie, it would be advised that individuals should eat no

largemouth bass, but consumption of channel catfish or black crappie is permissible without endangering health.

The intent of a **Limited Consumption Advisory** is for women of childbearing age and children (less than 15 years of age) to refrain from consumption of any fish indicated under this advisory. All other individuals should limit their consumption of the particular species to one meal per month.

For example, the FDA tolerance level for PCBs is calculated to protect people who consume one meal of fish a month throughout their lifetime. Individuals who eat these fish frequently or for many years place themselves at greater risk. Individuals who eat these fish only once each month or less frequently are at less risk.

PCBs are listed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as "probable human carcinogens". This listing is used for chemicals that have been found to cause cancer in laboratory animals but have not been shown to cause cancer in humans. PCBs have also been associated with a skin disorder known as chloracne as well as changes in cholesterol and triglyceride levels in human blood.

A composite sample made of all fish of a given species sampled from this site is used to develop guidance for that species/waterbody combination which should be used as a guide for safety. Therefore, individuals consuming fish that have been caught in an area generally will be exposed to no higher levels than found in the composite. Women of childbearing age and children should not consume any of these fish on which a **Limited** or **No Consumption Advisory** exists.

Advisories issued for 2004 are as follows:

Bear Creek Reservoir: ADPH recommends that women of childbearing age and children less than 15 years of age eat no largemouth bass taken from the Bear Creek Reservoir. Other adults should limit consumption of these fish to one meal per month. These fish were found to contain levels of mercury in excess of FDA guidance levels of 1.0 part per million.

Bon Secour River: The department recommends that people not eat largemouth bass from this waterbody, due to the presence of methylmercury in the fish sampled.

Perdido River: The department recommends that people not eat largemouth bass from this waterbody, due to the presence of methylmercury in the fish sampled.

The complete list of advisories is as follows:

BODY OF WATER / PORTION / TYPE OF ADVISORY / CONTAMINANT

(See notes at end of table.)

Bear Creek Reservoir
Dam Forebay Area
Limited Consumption Advisory** for largemouth bass
Contaminant – Mercury

Big Escambia Creek
At the Louisville and Nashville Railroad Bridge Crossing
Do not consume largemouth bass
Contaminant – Mercury

Blackwater River - Baldwin County
In the area between the mouth of the river and the pipeline crossing southeast of Robertsdale
Do not consume largemouth bass
Contaminant - Mercury

Blackwater River - Escambia County
Between the County Road 4 bridge and the Alabama/Florida state line
Do not consume largemouth bass
Contaminant - Mercury

Bon Secour River
Vicinity of County Road 10 bridge
Do not consume largemouth bass
Contaminant – Mercury

Choccolocco Creek
Entire length of creek from south of Oxford to Logan Martin Lake
Do not consume any fish
Contaminant – PCBs

Cold Creek Swamp
From confluence of Cold Creek with the Mobile River west through the swamp
Do not consume any fish
Contaminant – Mercury

Conecuh River
At Pollard Landing approximately 8.6 miles downstream of the paper mill
Do not consume largemouth bass
Contaminant - Mercury

Coosa River
Between Neely Henry Dam and Riverside
Limited consumption of catfish over 1 pound
Contaminant - PCBs

Coosa River
Between Riverside and Logan Martin Dam
Do not consume striped bass, or catfish.
Contaminant – PCBs

Coosa River
Between Logan Martin Dam and the railroad tracks crossing the Coosa near Vincent
Do not consume striped bass
Limited consumption of largemouth bass
Contaminant – PCBs

Coosa River
Lay Lake between Logan Martin Dam and Lay Dam
Do not consume striped bass
Contaminant – PCBs

Coosa River
In upper Lay Reservoir approximately two miles downstream of Logan Martin Dam and one half mile downstream from the Kelly Creek - Coosa River Confluence in the vicinity of Ratcliff/Elliott Island.
Limited consumption of spotted bass
Contaminant - PCBs

Coosa River
In the Croft Ferry area of Neely Henry Reservoir (Alabama Power Reservoir Mile 54).
No consumption of channel catfish
Contaminant - PCBs

Escatawpa River
Entire River
Do not consume largemouth bass or spotted bass
Contaminant - Mercury

Fish River
Entire River
Do not consume largemouth bass
Contaminant - Mercury

Fowl River
Entire River
Do not consume largemouth bass
Contaminant - Mercury

Gulf Coast
Entire coast
Do not consume king mackerel over 39 inches
Limited consumption of king mackerel under 39 inches
Contaminant - Mercury

Huntsville Spring Branch & Indian Creek
From Redstone Arsenal to the Tennessee River
Do not consume smallmouth or bigmouth buffalofish
Contaminant - DDT

Little Escambia Creek
In Escambia County at U.S. Highway 31/29 Bridge
Do not consume spotted bass
Contaminant - Mercury

Middle River
4.5 miles above its confluence with the Tensaw River
Do not consume largemouth bass
Contaminant - Mercury

Perdido River
Near its confluence with the Styx River in the vicinity of U.S. Hwy 90 Bridge Crossing
Do not consume largemouth bass
Contaminant – Mercury

Styx River
Entire River
Do not consume largemouth bass
Limited consumption of channel catfish
Contaminant - Mercury

Tensaw River
Entire River
Limited consumption of largemouth bass
Contaminant – Mercury

Tombigbee River
at river mile 60.5
Do not consume largemouth bass and channel catfish
Contaminant - Mercury, DDT

Yellow River
At County Road 4 bridge crossing approximately 1.5 miles upstream of Alabama/Florida line
Do not consume largemouth bass
Contaminant - Mercury

* Everyone should avoid eating the species of fish listed in the defined area.

** A **Limited Consumption Advisory** states that women of reproductive age and children less than 15 years old should avoid eating certain fish from these areas. Other people should limit their consumption of the particular species to one meal per month. A meal is considered to be 6 ounces of cooked fish or 8 ounces of raw fish.

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