



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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ADPH issues fish consumption advisories for 2005

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tissue monitoring of fish collected from various waterbodies throughout the state during the fall of 2004 indicates that the quality of water in Alabama generally has continued to improve over the past years, with a single, additional fish consumption advisory issued for 2005.

Fish consumption advisories are issued for specific waterbodies and specific species taken from those areas. The advisories apply to the specified area in the named waterbody as far as a boat can be taken upstream in a tributary, that is, to full pool elevations.

The new **No Consumption Advisory** issued this year is for largemouth bass from Polecat Creek in Baldwin County. This addition is due to mercury levels in fish tissues in excess of Food and Drug Administration advisory levels.

A **No Consumption Advisory** is being removed for largemouth bass from the Middle River (Mobile County) and largemouth bass and channel catfish from the Tombigbee River (Washington County); the fish collected from these areas have tested below FDA consumption advisory levels for a sufficient number of years to permit removal.

This also applies to the lifting of a **No Consumption Advisory** on the Croft Ferry portion of the Neely Henry Reservoir on the Coosa River. Removal of advisories indicates that the yearly trends in contaminant levels in fish have been downward and that at least two successive samplings have demonstrated no fish containing contaminant levels in excess of advisory levels. 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 23 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. ADPH utilizes safety levels recommended by FDA 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 complete listings of 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.

Contaminant concentrations, if present, were either below measurable concentrations or did not exceed FDA guidelines in fish collected from the following reservoirs: Lake Martin-Sugar Creek, Gantt, Harding, Neely Henry, Point A, West Point, Walter F. George, and Bear Creek. Similar results were recorded in samples collected from the Alabama River, Catoma Creek, Chattahoochee River, Choctawhatchee River, Tombigbee River, Coosa River, Middle River, Pea River, Turkey Branch, and one of two stations sampled on the Fish River. Fish samples collected from certain locations on Lay and Logan Martin Reservoirs also produced concentrations below measurable levels or below FDA guidelines for contaminants in fish.

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 Coosa, 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 each 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 2005 are as follows:

Polecat Creek: ADPH recommends that women of childbearing age and children less than 15 years of age eat no largemouth bass taken from Polecat Creek upstream of the confluence with the Fish River. 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.

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 Creek – 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 Creek - 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

Chickasaw Creek

Entire creek

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

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

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

Mobile River

At and south of the confluence with Cold Creek

Do not consume largemouth bass

Contaminant – Mercury

Opossum Creek

From the Pumping Station to the confluence with Valley Creek

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

Three Mile Creek

Downstream of railroad trestle down to 1 mile upstream of confluence with the Mobile River

No consumption of Atlantic croaker

Limited consumption of striped bass and speckled trout

Contaminant – Chlordane

Valley Creek

Around the confluence with Opossum Creek

Do not consume largemouth bass

Contaminant – Mercury

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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