NEWS RELEASE
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104
Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5534
www.adph.org

Alabama Department of Public Health issues fish consumption advisories

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:
Neil L. Sass, Ph.D.
(334) 206-5973

Concern about protecting the public from possible health exposure to mercury from eating fish has led to the issuance of several new fish consumption advisories for bodies of water in Alabama. The quality of water in Alabama generally continues improvements made in recent years.

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) collected more than 500 fish samples for analysis from various waterbodies throughout the state during the fall of 2006. The Alabama Department of Public Health assessed the results to determine potential human health effects.

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

The Alabama Department of Public Health, in consultation with ADEM and the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, has shifted to a more protective level for mercury. Mercury, which occurs both naturally and from man-made sources, can cause developmental disabilities and behavioral problems in children if it is consumed at high levels.

One way to minimize exposure in populations at risk is to reduce mercury derived from eating fish from contaminated water. These populations include women of childbearing age, pregnant women, and children younger than 15 years of age. The fish consumption advisories are based on a stricter action level for mercury developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Previously, Food and Drug Administration guidelines were used for mercury advisories. The FDA level was based on eating one fish meal per week.

Beginning with the 2006 advisories the Department of Public Health adopted a contaminant level for mercury in fish that would protect those who eat more than one fish meal per week. The new EPA standards are four times more protective. This advisory will be represented as the safe number of meals of that fish species that can be eaten in a given period of time, such as meals per week, meals per month or no consumption. A meal portion consists of six (6) ounces of cooked fish and eight (8) ounces of raw fish.

New **Consumption Advisories** were issued for the six bodies of water described here.

New Advisories for 2007

Big Creek Reservoir – Mobile County
Lakewide sampling
Largemouth bass
Contaminant – Mercury
Consumption level - One meal per month

Claiborne Reservoir – Monroe County
Dam forebay area, approximately River Mile 73
Largemouth bass
Contaminant – Mercury
Consumption level – Two meals per month

Lay Reservoir – St. Clair County
Upper Lay Reservoir, approximately 2 miles downstream of Logan Martin Dam and one-half mile downstream of Kelly Creek/Coosa River confluence, vicinity of Ratcliff/Elliot Island
Spotted bass
Contaminant – Mercury
Consumption level - Two meals per month

Mobile River – Mobile County
Mobile River at David Lake, River Mile 41.3
Largemouth bass
Contaminant – Mercury
Consumption level - Two meals per month

Tombigbee River – Clarke County
Vicinity of Tombigbee River Mile 83.6
Largemouth bass
Contaminant – Mercury
Consumption level - One meal per month

Upper Bear Creek Reservoir – Marion County
Dam forebay area
Largemouth bass
Contaminant – Mercury
Consumption level - Two meals per month

The no consumption advisory for largemouth bass taken from the Mobile River at the confluence of Cold Creek (River Mile 27) has been changed. It is permissible to safely eat one meal over a two-month period (0.5 meals per month, for example, 3 ounces cooked fish). Largemouth bass from the Tensaw River at the L & N Railroad Bridge in Baldwin County can be consumed at a level of three meals per month.

Fish from the following sites were analyzed and found to contain no contaminants at levels that required posting of advisories. **Fish from these bodies of water can be consumed with no restrictions:** Aliceville Reservoir (Pickens County), Bay Minette Creek (Baldwin County), Bon Secour Bay (Baldwin County), Coffeeville Reservoir (Choctaw County), and Five Mile Creek

(Jefferson County). In addition, fish from Gainesville Reservoir (Greene County), Gainesville Reservoir (Pickens County), Heron Bay (Mobile County), Wheeler Reservoir (Lawrence County), Thurlow Reservoir (Elmore County) and Lake Ogletree (Lee County) were found safe for unlimited consumption. Lewis Creek (Washington County), Little River (Monroe County), Middle River (Mobile County), Portersville Bay (Mobile County), Mobile Bay (Mobile County), and the Mobile River at the Little Sand Island area (Mobile County), and Mifflin Lake, Perdido Bay, Weeks Bay and Wolf Bay (Baldwin County) did not demonstrate any level of contaminant that would constitute a human health risk.

Fish were analyzed for up to 25 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, chlorpyriphos and toxaphene), and heavy metals (arsenic, cadmium, mercury and selenium) to which the fish may have been exposed.

In addition, fish were examined for body appearance, lipid content, age and weight. Fish are good indicators of the health of a waterbody. Some contaminants could bioaccumulate in fish and 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 larger species.

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 eat fish they catch from various waterbodies throughout the state. No regulations ban the consumption of any fish caught within the state, nor is there a risk of an acute toxic episode that could result from consuming fish containing the contaminants for which the state has conducted analyses.

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SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:

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 more 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.

Women of childbearing age and children should not consume any of these fish on which a **Limited** or **No Consumption Advisory** exists.

The following advisories, issued in previous years, remain in effect:

Subsequent sampling and analysis will render the advisories in the meal per month format.
BODY OF WATER / PORTION / TYPE OF ADVISORY / CONTAMINANT
(See notes at end of table.)

Bear Creek Reservoir – Franklin County
Dam forebay area
Largemouth bass
Contaminant –Mercury
Consumption level - One meal per month

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

Bilbo Creek – Washington County
Upstream of the confluence with the Tombigbee River
Largemouth bass
Consumption level - One meal per month
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

Cedar Creek – Houston County
Cedar Creek drainage from American Brass site near Headland tributary to Omussee Creek
Largemouth bass

Contaminant – Mercury
Consumption level - Two meals per month

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

Claiborne Reservoir – Monroe/Clarke counties
Dam forebay area and in vicinity of Lower Peachtree Access Area, approximately River Mile 96 close to the intersection of Clarke, Monroe and Wilcox counties
Contaminant – Mercury
Consumption level - Two meals per month

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
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

Cowpen Creek – Baldwin County
Upstream of confluence with Fish River
Largemouth bass
Contaminant – Mercury
Consumption level - One meal per month

Escatawpa River – Mobile County
At U.S. Highway 98 bridge crossing approximately 1/10 mile upstream of Alabama/Mississippi State Line
Spotted bass, Largemouth bass
Contaminant – Mercury
Consumption level - One meal per 2 months (or one-half meal per month) for spotted bass
One meal per month for largemouth bass

Fish River – Baldwin County
In vicinity of confluence with Polecat Creek approximately one mile upstream of County Road 32 Bridge
Largemouth bass
Contaminant – Mercury
Consumption level - One meal per 2 months (or one-half meal per month)

Fish River – Baldwin County
Approximately two miles upstream of U.S. 98 Bridge in the vicinity of Waterhole Branch/Fish River confluence just above the two islands
Largemouth bass
Contaminant – Mercury
Consumption level - Two meals per month

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 and 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 – Baldwin County
Near confluence with Styx River in vicinity of U.S. Highway 90 bridge crossing
Largemouth bass
Contaminant – Mercury
Consumption level - One meal per month for largemouth bass
Two meals per month for River Redhorse

Polecat Creek – Baldwin County
Upstream of confluence with Fish River
Largemouth bass
Contaminant – Mercury
Consumption level - One meal per month

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

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* 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.