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 2012 Fish Consumption Advisories

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:
John Guarisco, Ph.D.
(800) 201-8208

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

The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) annually updates fish consumption advisories based on data collected the preceding fall by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM).

ADEM collected samples of specific fish species for analysis from various waterbodies throughout the state during the fall of 2011. ADPH assessed the analytical results to determine whether any of the tested contaminants in the fish may give rise to potential human health effects.

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

Beginning with the 2007 advisories, ADPH adopted a contaminant level for mercury in fish that would protect those who might consider eating more than one fish meal per week. The new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards are four times more protective than Food and Drug Administration levels previously used. After the lower, more protective limit was adopted in 2007, an increasing number of waterbodies around the state received advisories for mercury in fish as they were tested. Newly issued advisories will be represented as the safe number of meals of that species of fish 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 6 ounces of cooked fish or 8 ounces of raw fish.

All advisories previously issued using FDA guidelines remain in effect for this year (2012) and other advisories have been updated to reflect the EPA consumption levels for mercury-contaminated fish.

Please note that a “no consumption” advisory for perfluoralkyl sufonate or PFOS has been recommended for the Baker’s Creek embayment of Wheeler Reservoir. PFOS is an emerging contaminant whose human toxicity is not well understood, nor has it been classified as a carcinogen. However, PFOS is readily absorbed by the digestive system and accumulates in

serum, kidney and liver. It is poorly metabolized and can stay in the body for a long time. Animal testing has indicated potential adverse systemic effects stemming from exposure. Additional information about PFOS can be found at http://www.epa.gov/fedfac/pdf/emerging_contaminants_pfos_pfoa.pdf. Future testing will determine if the advisory needs to be extended beyond the current location.

Fish were analyzed for up to 30 different materials or types of materials, including contaminants in the water (PCBs, including dioxins), pesticides (endosulfan I and II, 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. 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 larger species.

The advice contained in this release and complete listings of the posted fish consumption advisories (http://www.adph.org) are 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 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.

A fish consumption advisory can be issued for one or more specific species of fish within a waterbody or an advisory can be extended to include all fish species within that waterbody. When excess levels of a contaminant are found in a specific species of fish, an advisory is issued for that specific species. For example, if an advisory had been issued for largemouth bass and not for channel catfish, it would be advised that individuals should not eat largemouth bass, but consumption of channel catfish is permissible without endangering health.

When excess levels of a contaminant are found in multiple fish species sampled from a specific waterbody, a No Consumption Advisory is issued. Consumption of any fish from a specific waterbody under a No Consumption Advisory may place the consumer at risk for harm from the contaminant.

If a particular species is not listed in the advisory, it is prudent to assume that similar species with similar feeding habits should be consumed with caution.

In previous years' advisories, the term "Limited Consumption" was used. The intent of a Limited Consumption Advisory was for women of childbearing age, pregnant women 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. These criteria are still being used, but in this advisory the term Limited Consumption has been removed and replaced with specific columns for each groups. This is the only change that has been made, and was done in an effort to increase readability of the advisory.

8/31/12
TABLES OF THE 2012 ADVISORIES ARE AVAILABLE AT

http://www.adph.org/tox/assets/2012_Advisory_Table.pdf