

DSHS Issues Fish Consumption Advisory for Galveston Bay

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has issued an advisory warning people to limit their consumption of spotted seatrout and catfish from Galveston Bay. The advisory, which includes Chocolate Bay, East Bay, West Bay, Trinity Bay and contiguous waters, was issued after a two-year study showed elevated levels of dioxins and polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, in the two fish.

Other fish species such as red drum, black drum and flounder were sampled and are safe to eat.

Adults are advised to limit consumption of the two fish to no more than one 8-ounce meal a month. Women who are nursing, pregnant or who may become pregnant and children should not eat any catfish or spotted seatrout from these waters.

PCBs are industrial chemicals once used as coolants and lubricants in electrical transformers and capacitors. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency banned PCBs in 1979, but items containing PCBs did not have to be replaced. PCBs degrade slowly in the environment.

Dioxins are formed as unintentional by-products of many industrial and chemical production processes and incomplete combustion.

Long-term consumption of PCBs may cause cancer and reproductive, immune system, developmental and liver problems. Dioxins can cause skin rashes, liver damage, weight loss, reproductive damage and may increase the risk of cancer.

Spotted seatrout, also known as speckled trout, is a favorite among recreational anglers in coastal waters. The DSHS advisory does not prohibit catching or possessing either fish species. The contaminants do not pose a threat to other recreational uses of the bay such as swimming or other contact recreational activities.

Fish consumption advisories have been in effect for the Houston Ship Channel and upper portion of Galveston Bay since 1990.