

March 8, 2010

DSHS Issues Fish Advisory for Portions of Neches River

The Texas Department of State Health Services today issued an advisory warning people to limit their consumption of flathead catfish, freshwater drum, gar, largemouth bass, spotted bass and white bass from the Neches River in seven counties in East Texas.

The advisory area encompasses a stretch of the Neches River and all contiguous waters in Angelina, Hardin, Houston, Jasper, Polk, Trinity and Tyler counties.

The advisory was issued after laboratory testing showed elevated levels of mercury in fish samples from the six species taken from the river. Other species, such as crappie, blue catfish, channel catfish and smallmouth buffalo, were sampled and are not included in the advisory.

Adults should limit consumption of the six fish species from this stretch of the Neches River to no more than two 8-ounce servings per month. Children under 12 years old should limit their consumption of these same fish to no more than two 4-ounce servings per month. Women who are nursing, pregnant or who may become pregnant should not consume the six fish species from this stretch of the Neches River.

Regular ingestion of methylmercury, the mercury compound in the fish, can harm the human brain and nervous system. Young children are especially at risk. The brain and nervous system in a developing fetus can be permanently damaged if the mother-to-be eats foods containing elevated levels of mercury during pregnancy.

Mercury is a naturally occurring element that gets into air and water from the weathering of the earth's crust, from the burning of fossil fuels and from some industrial discharges and emissions. Elevated levels of mercury in fish do not pose a health risk for people swimming, fishing or participating in other water recreation activities in the Neches River.

The Neches River flows through East Texas to its mouth on Sabine Lake near Port Arthur.

-30-

(News Media Contact: Allison Lowery, DSHS Assistant Press Officer, 512-458-7400.)

DSHS Press Office on [Twitter](#)