

DSHS Issues Fish Consumption Advisory for Neches River

The Texas Department of State Health Services has issued a fish consumption advisory for portions of the Neches River Basin, including Sam Rayburn Reservoir and B.A. Steinhagen Reservoir. The advisory covers six species of fish caught between the State Highway 7 bridge west of Lufkin downstream to the U.S. Highway 96 bridge near Evadale and both reservoirs. It was issued after laboratory testing of fish samples found elevated levels of mercury and dioxins.

DSHS recommends people limit or avoid consumption of these species as outlined in the table below because eating contaminated fish can be a health hazard.

Species Affected	Women of Childbearing Age and Children < 12	Women Past Childbearing Age and Adult Men
Blue catfish > 30 inches	DO NOT EAT	Two 8 oz. meals/month
Flathead catfish	DO NOT EAT	One 8 oz. meal/month
Gar (all species)	DO NOT EAT	One 8oz. meal/month
Largemouth bass > 16 inches	DO NOT EAT	Two 8 oz. meals/month
Smallmouth buffalo	DO NOT EAT	DO NOT EAT
Spotted bass > 16 inches	DO NOT EAT	Two 8 oz. meals/month

DSHS recommends children under 12 and women who are nursing, pregnant or who may become pregnant avoid eating the affected species because the nervous systems of unborn and young children are particularly susceptible to the health effects of toxins. Previous advisories for the Neches River area based on high mercury levels had recommended children limit consumption of particular fish. Recent testing prompted DSHS to recommend children under 12 not eat the affected fish at all.

Elevated levels of mercury and dioxins in fish do not pose a health risk for people swimming or participating in other water recreation activities.