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The following fish consumption advisory was issued on 02/17/22 by the Department of Health, the Department of Environmental Quality, and the Department of Wildlife & Fisheries. For more information, please contact:

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FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORY FOR THE OUACHITA RIVER

In response to recent sampling and analysis of fish-mercury data, the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and Department of Wildlife & Fisheries (DWF) are issuing the following advisory for the Ouachita River in Morehouse, Union, Ouachita, Caldwell, and Catahoula parishes where unacceptable levels of mercury have been detected in bigmouth buffalo, black crappie, blue catfish, bluegill, bowfin, channel catfish, flathead catfish, freshwater drum, largemouth bass, smallmouth buffalo, spotted bass, striped bass, white bass, and white crappie. The advisory area includes the Ouachita River from the Louisiana/Arkansas border to the confluence of the Tensas River including any lakes that are inside of the levee system, or within the Ouachita River flood plain. **This advisory supersedes a previous advisory issued for this waterbody on May 29, 2003. The previous advisory superseded an advisory issued by the state in July of 1992.**


LDH, DEQ, and DWF advise that the following precautions be taken when eating fish taken from the Ouachita River:

- **Women of childbearing age and children less than seven years of age should NOT CONSUME bowfin (choupique, grinnel), crappie (sac-à-lait), flathead catfish, freshwater drum (gaspergou), largemouth bass, spotted bass or white bass; AND should limit all other species to no more than ONE MEAL PER MONTH.**
- **Other adults and children seven years of age and older should consume no more than TWO MEALS PER MONTH of bass, bowfin, catfish, crappie (sac-à-lait) and freshwater drum (gaspergou) combined.**


Mercury is an element that occurs naturally in the environment. It is released into the environment through natural processes and human activities. Consequently, there are small amounts of mercury in lakes, rivers, and oceans. Here, the mercury is turned into methylmercury, a form that is particularly harmful to an unborn baby or young child. Fish absorb methylmercury as they feed on aquatic organisms. Nearly all fish contain trace amounts of methylmercury. Larger fish, especially those that feed on other fish, contain more methylmercury than smaller fish. Therefore, in general, it is recommended that smaller fish be consumed instead of larger ones.

People are exposed throughout their lives to low levels of mercury. One way they can be exposed to mercury is from eating contaminated fish. Pregnant women can pass mercury from the fish they eat to their unborn babies, and nursing mothers can pass the mercury to their infants through their breast milk. Health effects from harmful levels of mercury can include nervous system and kidney damage. Developing fetuses are more sensitive to the toxic effects of mercury, especially in the first trimester of pregnancy. In addition to developing fetuses, infants and children are more sensitive to the effects of mercury; therefore, consumption advisories are issued at lower fish tissue concentration levels for these groups.


This advisory is issued as a precaution. Further sampling will be carried out by DEQ to determine the need for modifications to this advisory, including an adjustment of the boundaries if necessary. If you have consumed bigmouth buffalo, black crappie, blue catfish, bluegill, bowfin, channel catfish, flathead catfish, freshwater drum, largemouth bass, smallmouth buffalo, spotted bass, striped bass, white bass, or white crappie, it is not likely that there is an immediate need to be concerned about the effects of mercury. However, you should consult your personal doctor if you are concerned.



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