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*The following fish consumption advisory was issued on April 17, 2024 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 BAYOU DORCHEAT

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 Bayou Dorcheat in Webster Parish where unacceptable levels of mercury have been detected in: Black/White Crappie (Sac-a-lait), Bowfin (Choupique, Grinnel), Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish, Freshwater Drum, Largemouth/Spotted Bass, Redear Sunfish, and White Bass. The advisory area includes Bayou Dorcheat from the Arkansas state line to its confluence with Lake Bistineau. **This advisory supersedes a previous advisory issued for this waterbody on March 8, 2006, which superseded a previous advisory issued on July 1, 2004.**

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

- **Women of childbearing age and children less than seven years of age should not consume Flathead Catfish or Largemouth/Spotted Bass; AND should limit consumption of all other species to ONE MEAL PER MONTH.**
- **Other adults and children seven years of age and older should not consume more than ONE MEAL PER MONTH of Flathead Catfish; OR should not consume more than TWO MEALS PER MONTH of Bowfin (Choupique, Grinnel), Freshwater Drum (Gaspergou), Largemouth/Spotted Bass, and White Bass 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, have more methylmercury than smaller fish. Therefore, it is generally 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 by eating contaminated fish. Pregnant women can pass mercury from the fish they eat to their unborn babies, and nursing mothers can pass it to their infants through 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 susceptible 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 eaten Black/White Crappie, Bowfin, Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish, Freshwater Drum, Largemouth/Spotted Bass, Redear Sunfish, and White Bass from these waters, it is not likely that there is an immediate need to be concerned about the effects of mercury. However, you should consult your doctor if you are concerned.

More information about methylmercury contamination and methylmercury advisories can be found here: [ldh.la.gov/EatSafeFish](http://ldh.la.gov/EatSafeFish).



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