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*The following fish consumption advisory was issued on July 25, 2018 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 HENDERSON LAKE AREA

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 Henderson Lake in St. Martin parish where unacceptable levels of mercury have been detected in largemouth bass and bowfin. The advisory area includes Henderson Lake, Lake Bigeux, and all waters within the area bounded on the north by the St. Landry/St. Martin Parish Line, on the east by the West Atchafalaya River levee (or Hwy. 3177), on the south by Hwy. 3177 and on the west by the West Atchafalaya Basin levee. **This advisory supersedes a previous advisory issued for this water body in May of 2003.**

The Department of Health (LDH), Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and Department of Wildlife & Fisheries (DWF) advise that the following precautions be taken when eating fish taken from the Henderson Lake Area:


- **Women of childbearing age and children less than seven years of age should consume no more than TWO MEALS PER MONTH of largemouth bass and bowfin combined (a meal is considered to be half a pound of fish for adults and children).**
- **Other adults and children seven years of age or older: No advisory.**


Louisiana fish consumption advisories are based on the estimate that the average Louisiana resident eats four fish meals per month (1 meal = 1/2 pound). If you or your family members eat more than four meals per month from local waterbodies, you might increase your health risks. You can contact the Office of Public Health toll free at 1-888-293-7020 for more information.

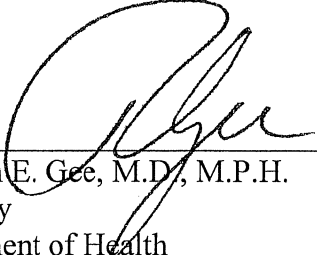
Mercury is an element that occurs naturally in the environment. It is released into the environment through natural processes and human activities. Consequently, there are small amounts of mercury in lakes, rivers, and oceans. In the sediments of some water bodies, the mercury is turned into methylmercury, 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 may 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 species under advisory 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 personal doctor if you are concerned.

  
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State Health Officer and Medical Director  
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 5/22/18  
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6/11/18

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7/2/18

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