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The following fish consumption advisory was issued on 05/29/03 by the Department of Health & Hospitals, 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 & Hospitals (DHH), 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 bass, buffalo, catfish, crappie (sac-a-lait), freshwater drum (gaspergou), and bowfin (choupique, grinnel). 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 the levee system, or within the Ouachita River flood plain. **This advisory supersedes a previous advisory issued for this water body by the state in July of 1992.**

DHH, 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 and should consume no more than ONE MEAL PER MONTH of all other species combined from the advisory area (a meal is considered to be half a pound of fish for adults and children).**
- **Other adults and children seven years of age and older SHOULD NOT CONSUME BOWFIN and should consume no more than FOUR MEALS PER MONTH of all other species combined from the advisory area (a meal is considered to be half a pound of fish for adults and children).**

- **Unless the fish species is specifically addressed in the details of the advisory, please limit consumption of all species in an advisory area to 4 meals per month. Louisiana fish consumption advisories are based on the estimate that the average Louisiana resident eats 4 fish meals per month (1 meal = ½ pound). If you or your family members eat more than 4 meals of fish a month from local water bodies, you might increase your health risks. You can contact the Office of Public Health toll free at 1-888-293-7020 for more information about eating fish that contain chemicals.**

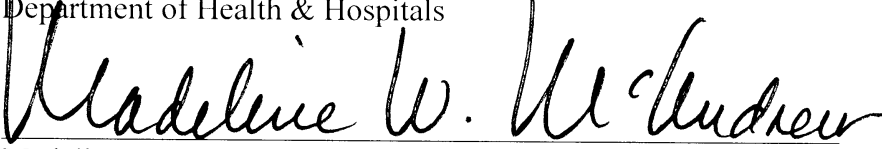
Mercury is an element that occurs naturally in the environment. It is released into the environment through natural processes and human activities. Consequently, there are small amounts of mercury in lakes, rivers, and oceans. Nearly all fish contain trace amounts of mercury. They absorb mercury from the water and sediment as they feed on aquatic organisms. Larger predator fish contain more mercury 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. 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.

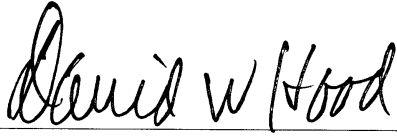
This advisory is issued as a precaution. Further sampling will be carried out by DEQ to determine the need for modifications to this advisory, including an adjustment of the boundaries if necessary. If you have consumed bass, buffalo, catfish, crappie, freshwater drum and/or bowfin from these waters, 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.



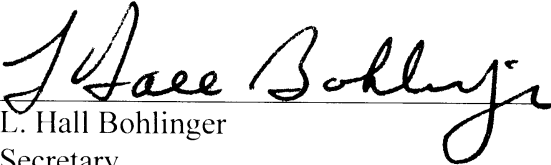
Jimmy Gaudry, M.D.
State Health Officer and Medical Director
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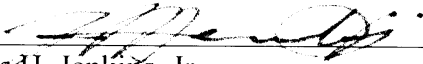
Madeline W. McAndrew
Assistant Secretary, Office of Public Health
Department of Health & Hospitals



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