

Mercury and fish consumption advisories issued for six Louisiana waterways

Baton Rouge, La. (May 21, 2020) — The Louisiana Departments of Health, Environmental Quality, and Wildlife and Fisheries today issue a series of fish consumption advisories for six bodies of water. These most recent advisories include one new warning and updates to five previously issued warnings. The State issues precautionary advisories when unacceptable levels of mercury are detected in fish or shellfish.

The Department of Environmental Quality conducts fish sampling. LDH then uses this data to determine the need for additional advisories or to modify existing advisories. Each advisory lists the specific fish, makes consumption recommendations and outlines the geographic boundaries of the affected waterways.

Bayou Chene and Bayou Lacassine

- *Includes Bayou Chene from its headwaters near Jennings to its confluence with Bayou Lacassine, and Bayou Lacassine from its headwaters near Lacassine to its confluence with Bayou Misere*
- Women of childbearing age and children less than 7 years of age should consume no more than **one meal per month*** of largemouth bass and bowfin (choupique, grinnel) combined from the advisory area; OR should consume no more than **two meals per month** of crappie, freshwater drum (gaspergou), smallmouth buffalo and warmouth combined from the advisory area.
- Other adults and children 7 years of age and older: no advisory

Bayou Nezpique

- *From the headwaters of Bayou Nezpique to its confluence with the Mermentau River*
- Women of childbearing age and children less than 7 years of age should consume no more than **one meal per month** of largemouth bass and bowfin (choupique, grinnel) combined from the advisory area; OR should consume no more than **two meals per month** of freshwater drum (gaspergou), crappie, and warmouth combined from the advisory area.
- Other adults and children 7 years of age and older should consume no more than **3 meals per month** of bowfin.

Big Alabama Bayou

- *Includes the Big Alabama Bayou for its entire length from the boat landing at Hwy 975 to its southern end near the Atchafalaya River Pilot Channel*
- Women of childbearing age and children less than 7 years of age **should not consume** flathead catfish. Do not consume **more than one meal per month** of any other species from the advisory area.
- Other adults and children 7 years of age and older should consume no more than **two meals per month** of flathead catfish from the advisory area.

Little Alabama Bayou**

- *Includes Little Alabama Bayou from its headwaters near East Krotz Springs to its confluence with Big Alabama Bayou*
- Women of childbearing age and children less than 7 years of age should consume no more than **one meal per month** of bowfin (choupique, grinnel) and largemouth bass combined from the advisory area; OR should consume **no more than three meals per month** of black crappie and freshwater drum (gaspergou) combined from the advisory area.
- Other adults and children 7 years of age and older: no advisory

Calcasieu River Drainage Basin

- Includes the Calcasieu River from Hwy 26 to the Saltwater barrier north of Lake Charles, the West Fork Calcasieu River, Houston River, Hickory Creek, Beckwith Creek, English Bayou and Little River
- Women of childbearing age and children less than 7 years of age should consume no more than **one meal per month** of black crappie, largemouth bass, bowfin (choupique, grinnel), freshwater drum (gaspergou), spotted bass, and flathead catfish combined; OR should consume no more than **two meals per month** of other species caught from the advisory area.
- Other adults and children 7 years of age and older should consume no more than **three meals per month** of largemouth bass, freshwater drum (gaspergou), and bowfin (choupique, grinnel) combined from the advisory area.

Old River (Niblett Bluff in Calcasieu Parish)

- Includes the Old River from its headwaters to the confluence with the Sabine River
- Women of childbearing age and children less than 7 years of age should **not consume** bowfin (choupique, grinnel) or freshwater drum (gaspergou); and should consume no more than **one meal per month** of any other species from the advisory area.
- Other adults and children 7 years of age and older should consume no more than **two meals per month** of freshwater drum (gaspergou) and bowfin (choupique, grinnel) combined

* A meal is considered to be half a pound of fish for adults

** New advisory

Because of mercury contamination, there are now fish consumption advisories for 49 waterways in Louisiana and one for the Gulf of Mexico.

Louisiana fish consumption advisories are based on the estimate that the average resident eats four meals of fish per month. Consuming more than this from local water bodies may increase health risks.

Mercury is an element that occurs naturally in the environment. Consequently, there are small amounts of mercury in the sediments of streams, lakes, rivers and oceans. Nearly all fish contain trace amounts of mercury. They absorb mercury as they feed on aquatic organisms. Larger predator fish contain more mercury than smaller fish. It is recommended that smaller fish be consumed instead of larger ones.

People are exposed to low levels of mercury throughout their lives. Eating contaminated fish is one way we are exposed to mercury. Health effects from harmful levels of mercury can include nervous system and kidney damage. Young children and developing fetuses are more sensitive to the toxic effects of mercury. Therefore, consumption advisories are issued at lower fish tissue concentrations for women of childbearing age and children under 7 years of age.

The full text for each advisory is posted online at www.ldh.la.gov/EatSafeFish or by calling toll-free 1-888-293-7020. You may also access the information by downloading the Department of Environmental Quality's new app which is available through [Google Play](#) (DEQ Fish Advisories) and the [App Store](#) (LA Fish Advisories).

About the Louisiana Department of Health

The Louisiana Department of Health strives to protect and promote health statewide and to ensure access to medical, preventive and rehabilitative services for all state residents. The Louisiana Department of Health includes the Office of Public Health, Office of Aging & Adult Services, Office of Behavioral Health, Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities, and Healthy Louisiana (Medicaid). To learn more, visit www.ldh.la.gov or follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or our [blog](#).

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Contact: Mindy Faciane 225-342-0152, mindy.faciane@la.gov
or Kevin Litten 225-219-3542, kevin.litten@la.gov