

March 27, 2007

Consumption Advisory Issued for Two Panola County Lakes

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has issued an advisory warning people to limit consumption of freshwater drum and largemouth bass from Clear Lake and Hills Lake and bowfin from Clear Lake. Both lakes are in Panola County in East Texas. The advisory was issued after laboratory testing detected elevated levels of mercury in the three species.

Adults and children 12 and older are advised to eat no more than two 8-ounce servings per month. Children under 12 should eat no more than two 4-ounce servings per month.

Pregnant women, women who could become pregnant and mothers who are breastfeeding are advised not to eat any of the freshwater drum and largemouth bass from the lakes or bowfin from Clear Lake.

No other species of fish from the two lakes are included in the warning.

Regular ingestion of methyl mercury, the mercury compound in the fish, can harm the human brain and nervous system. Young children are especially at risk. The brain and nervous system in a developing fetus can be permanently damaged if the mother-to-be eats foods containing elevated levels of mercury during pregnancy.

Mercury is a naturally occurring element that gets into air and water from the weathering of the earth's crust, from the burning of fossil fuels and from some industrial discharges and emissions.

There is no risk of mercury poisoning from fishing, skiing or swimming in the two lakes.