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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 KEPLER CREEK LAKE

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 Kepler Creek Lake in Bienville Parish where unacceptable levels of mercury have been detected in: Black Crappie, Bowfin, Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish, and Largemouth Bass. The advisory area includes Kepler Creek Lake only. **This advisory supersedes a previous advisory issued for this waterbody on May 29, 2003.**
LDH, DEQ, and DWF advise that the following precautions be taken when eating fish taken from Kepler Creek Lake:

- **Women of childbearing age and children less than seven years of age should not consume Bowfin (Choupique, Grinnel); AND should not consume more than TWO MEALS PER MONTH of Black Crappie (Sac-a-lait), Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish, and Largemouth Bass COMBINED.**

- **Other adults and children seven years of age and older should not consume more than TWO MEALS PER MONTH of Bowfin (Choupique, Grinnel).**

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 Crappie, Bowfin, Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish, and Largemouth 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.

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