



O K L A H O M A
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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News Release

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DEQ Issues Fish Consumption Advisory for Tar Creek Area

The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is issuing a series of fish consumption advisories for people who live in the Tar Creek area. The advisories are in reference to fish caught in waters affected by runoff from historic lead and zinc mining operations. This fish advisory does not mean all fish caught from these waters are unsafe to eat. Instead, it provides guidelines for residents of the Tar Creek area to make informed choices about their health and diet. The general public, living outside the Tar Creek Mining District and visitors, are not at risk from consuming fish from this region.

The consumption of fish containing elevated levels of lead is a concern. Chronic exposure to lead can cause health problems. Lead is particularly harmful to the developing brains and nervous systems of fetuses and young children. Children are more sensitive to the toxic effects of lead. These consumption recommendations are calculated to protect children, but are also protective of adults.

This advisory concerns the consumption of fish caught in the Tar Creek area or waters that may be impacted by the Tri-State Mining District and the Tar Creek Superfund Site. A study conducted in 2003 examined cadmium, lead, and zinc concentrations in fish collected from mill ponds within the Tar Creek Superfund Site, as well as the Spring and Neosho Rivers downstream from historic lead and zinc mining activities. In 2007, a follow up study was conducted. This study included the same study area as the 2003 study. It also added sites extending throughout Grand Lake and the Grand Neosho River below Pensacola Dam.

Lead is known to accumulate in the bones and organs of fish. DEQ analyzed a variety of fish using methods that represent different ways local citizens prepare and consume the fish they catch. The preparation methods include carcass (scaled, skin-on, headless, gutted fish to represent fish that are canned or non-game fish that are difficult to obtain boneless fillets from), skin-on fillets (boneless, scaled), skinless fillets, and paddlefish eggs.

Fish collected were grouped into five categories: Non-Game Fish (Carp, Freshwater Drum, Redhorse Sucker, and Smallmouth Buffalo); Game Fish (Black Crappie, Largemouth Bass, Spotted Bass, White Bass, and White Crappie); Sunfish (Bluegill Sunfish, Green Sunfish, and Hybrid Sunfish); Catfish (Blue Catfish and Channel Catfish); and Paddle Fish.

Most boneless fillet portions are safe to eat in normal quantities. The only exception is non-game fish from Spring River, such as carp and buffalo, from which boneless fillets

are difficult to obtain. Paddlefish and paddlefish eggs are safe to consume normal quantities.

To reduce exposure to lead when consuming fish from the waters impacted by the Tar Creek Superfund site and the Tri-State Mining District, people should eat portions that do not contain bones or skin.

DEQ reminds citizens that fish are an important part of a healthy diet providing high quality protein and essential nutrients. However, not all fish should be consumed in unlimited amounts by everyone.

Specific consumption advisories are outlined in the table below.

Consumption Advisory Table

**Note: All advisories are for fish preparations containing bones except one advisory for boneless fillets for non-game fish caught on the Spring River.*

	Mill Ponds	Spring River	Neosho River	Grand Lake
Non-Game Fish	Not sampled.	3 meals per month of preparations with bones <i>*Boneless Fillet Preparations* 9 meals per month</i>	8 meals per month of preparations with bones	6 meals per month of preparations with bones
Game Fish	14 meals per month of preparations with bones	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted
Sunfish	2 meals per month of preparations with bones	5 meals per month of preparations with bones	Unrestricted	Unrestricted
Catfish	Not sampled.	9 meals per month of preparations with bones	Unrestricted	Unrestricted
Paddle Fish	Not sampled.	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted

A meeting will be held in Miami in March to inform the public of the advisory and to allow an opportunity for questions and concerns. The time and place of the meeting has not been determined.

For more information, contact the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality at 405-702-1000 or visit www.deq.state.ok.us/csdnew/2007TCFishReport.pdf to view the 2007 study.