

Dec. 29, 2011

### **DSHS Issues Fish Consumption Advisory for Sabine Lake**

The Texas Department of State Health Services has issued an advisory limiting the consumption of gafftopsail catfish from Texas waters of Sabine Lake in Jefferson and Orange counties. DSHS advises adults eat no more than three eight-ounce portions of gafftopsail catfish per month from the affected waters. Additionally, children under 12, women who are or may become pregnant, and nursing mothers should consume no more than one four-ounce portion per month.

The advisory also covers contiguous Texas waters, including Sabine Pass and portions of the Sabine and Neches rivers.

Laboratory testing showed levels of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, that exceed DSHS standards in samples of gafftopsail catfish collected from the lake. DSHS tested tissue samples from eight species of fish as part of its evaluation. DSHS did not find elevated levels of contaminants in samples of alligator gar, black and red drum, sand trout, southern flounder, spotted seatrout or striped bass.

PCBs are industrial chemicals once used as coolants and lubricants in electrical equipment and for other industrial purposes. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency banned PCBs in 1979, but equipment containing PCBs did not have to be replaced. PCBs break down very slowly in the environment and can accumulate in animals such as fish. Long-term consumption of PCBs may cause cancer as well as reproductive, immune system, developmental and liver problems in humans.

Elevated levels of PCBs in fish do not pose a health risk for people participating in recreational activities on Sabine Lake.

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