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## Speckled Trout Consumption Limit Advised

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has issued an advisory recommending limited consumption of speckled trout from the Houston Ship Channel and Upper Galveston Bay.

The advisory, signed by Texas Commissioner of State Health Services Eduardo Sanchez, was issued after DSHS laboratory tests detected elevated levels of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, in the sampled fish.

The affected area is downsteam of the Lynchburg Ferry to a line from Red Bluff Point to Five Mile Cut marker to Houston Point.

DSHS recommends eating no more than eight ounces per month of the speckled trout from the identified waters. Women who are pregnant or nursing or who may become pregnant and children should not eat any of the speckled trout. A 1990 advisory still in effect applies the same consumption advice to catfish and blue crabs from the same area.

PCBs are industrial chemicals once used as coolants and lubricants in electrical transformers and capacitors. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency banned PCBs in 1979, but items containing PCBs did not have to be replaced. PCBs degrade slowly in the environment.

Long-term consumption of PCBs may cause cancer and reproductive, immune system, developmental and liver problems. According to DSHS standards, PCB levels in fish above 0.047 parts per million (ppm) may pose a health risk to humans. PCB levels in the sampled speckled trout averaged 0.140 ppm and were as high as 0.380.

Speckled trout, also known as spotted seatrout, is one of the most sought-after fish by recreational anglers in the area. The DSHS advisory does not prohibit catching or possession of the fish. Speckled trout from Texas waters is not legally sold in restaurants or stores.

The advisory followed several months of DSHS testing, data analysis and public health risk assessment. The DSHS study was funded by a $99,000 grant from the Galveston Bay Estuary Program.

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*(**News Media:** for more information contact Kirk Wiles, DSHS Seafood and Aquatic Life Group, 512-719-0215; or Doug McBride, DSHS Press Officer, 512-458-7524.)*