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TDH Web site: www.tdh.state.tx.us

TDH Relaxes Arroyo Colorado Fish Consumption Advisories

The Texas Department of Health (TDH) has modified consumption advisories issued in 1980 and 1993 that limited the amount of fish people should eat from the Arroyo Colorado in Cameron and Hidalgo Counties in South Texas.

"Essentially, any fish from the Arroyo Colorado except smallmouth buffalo can now be eaten without restrictions," said Kirk Wiles, director of TDH's seafood safety division.

Wiles said PCB concentrations in channel catfish, blue catfish, flathead catfish, southern flounder, common carp and smallmouth buffalo from the Arroyo Colorado upstream from the Port of Harlingen have dropped to safe levels and that pesticide content has dropped to safe levels in all fish tested except smallmouth buffalo.

Elevated levels of PCBs and pesticides had prompted the original advisories.

Wiles said adults should eat no more than two eight-ounce portions of smallmouth buffalo from the Arroyo Colorado per month. Children should eat no more than two four-ounce servings per month. These restrictions also apply to smallmouth buffalo from Llano Grande Lake and the Main Floodway upstream of the Port of Harlingen.

Frequent or long-term consumption of smallmouth buffalo from these waters could lead to liver damage or increased cancer risk. Young children and pregnant or nursing women may be especially at risk, Wiles said.

He said all crabs and fish, including smallmouth buffalo, taken from the Arroyo Colorado downstream from the Port of Harlingen may be eaten without restrictions.

PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, a group of compounds once used in electrical capacitors and transformers, are believed to cause liver damage, reproductive disorders and cancer. They were banned in the United States in the late 1970s.

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