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Health Commissioner Bans Fish Consumption from Mountain Creek Lake

Dr. David R. Smith, Texas Commissioner of Health, today warned that people should not consume fish taken from Mountain Creek Lake located off IH-20 near Grand Prairie.

The commissioner signed an order banning possession of fish from the lake, effective at 12:01 a.m. tomorrow, after reviewing results of a study conducted by the Navy in which fish from the lake were found to contain PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls). The Texas Department of Health (TDH) has warned people not to eat any fish taken from the lake until tests show that the lake's fish are free of the cancer-causing chemicals.

PCBs are a group of compounds that once were used in electrical capacitors and transformers and are thought to cause cancer, skin irritations and reproductive disorders. PCBs are very long-lasting in the environment, and though their use has been banned, they continue to be found in fish from contaminated areas.

Samples of bass, catfish and carp taken from the lake indicated PCB contamination. Dr. Smith said, "The concern is for long term consumption. People should avoid eating any species of fish from Mountain Creek Lake until further notice."

Smith explained that the Mountain Creek Lake closure is one of 14 active consumption advisories or closures to fishing in Texas waters because of contaminated fish. Of those 14, 11 are in urban or industrial discharge areas. "While we do not believe that the number of public health actions we have had to take in urban areas is a condemnation of all Texas waters, it certainly signals a potential problem with fish from waters near our cities. TDH will continue to sample and evaluate fish safety in these areas as our resources permit," Smith said.

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(For more information contact Richard Thompson, Director, Division of Seafood Safety, at 512-719-0215, or David Vaughan, Communications and Special Health Initiatives Division, at 512-458-7400.) -- End --