

NEWS

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State Officials Announce Fish Consumption Advisory for Echo Canyon Reservoir

Tiger Muskie Also Off Limits at Gross Reservoir in Boulder County

DENVER – The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Colorado Division of Wildlife today announced a fish consumption advisory for Echo Canyon Reservoir in Archuleta County due to elevated mercury levels detected in fish tissue samples.

The fish tissue testing is part of an ongoing, five-year sampling plan of approximately 120 water bodies in the state. More than 60 water bodies now have lab testing completed as part of the study. Of those, 18 (less than one-third) have required fish consumption advisories for mercury. Water bodies with fish consumption advisories are listed on the state's Web site at <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/wq/FishCon/FishCon.html>.

Each fish consumption advisory includes consumption recommendations in three categories: for the general population; children age 6 and younger; and women who are pregnant, nursing or who may become pregnant.

The advisory posted for Echo Canyon recommends that children age 6 or younger do not consume any large mouth bass regardless of size, or yellow perch or black crappie larger than 7 inches. Pregnant women, nursing women and women who plan on becoming pregnant are advised not to consume yellow perch larger than 7 inches or largemouth bass larger than 14 inches, and that they limit consumption of black crappie larger than 7 inches and largemouth bass

smaller than 14 inches to one meal per month. For the general population, the recommendation is not to consume more than one meal per month of yellow perch or black crappie larger than 7 inches and large mouth bass larger than 14 inches. The general population also is advised not to consume more than two meals per month of largemouth bass smaller than 14 inches.

In addition to the new posting at Echo Canyon Reservoir, fish tissue sampling also found a 38-inch tiger muskie with a slightly elevated mercury level at Gross Reservoir in Boulder County. However, state wildlife officials confirm there is a very small population of older tiger muskie in Gross Reservoir and tiger muskie have not been stocked at this reservoir in years. Three trout were tested from Gross Reservoir and did not have elevated mercury levels. Trout in Colorado have not been found to have elevated mercury and are fit for human consumption. It will be some time before the Colorado Division of Wildlife and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment again sample tiger muskie or other fish at Gross Reservoir.

Other new fish sampling results include 11 water bodies where fish consumption advisories for mercury are not needed: Big Creek Reservoir, Boedecker Reservoir, Cherry Creek Reservoir, Douglas Reservoir, Eagle River, Elkhead Reservoir, Lake Granby, Lon Hagler Reservoir, Smith Reservoir, Wellington #4 Reservoir and the Yampa River.

The presence of elevated mercury levels in fish has been a national concern for some time. The fish consumption advisories are a caution to the public and are not mandatory.

Mercury poisoning can affect humans of all ages. However, pregnant women and children under age 6 are especially susceptible, because mercury can harm developing nervous systems in fetuses and young children. Adults exposed to high mercury levels also can suffer from central nervous system and cardiovascular problems.

Mercury is more prominent among larger predator fish. It is an organic form of mercury that bioaccumulates in the food chain, and large predatory fish are at the top of the food chain in lakes and reservoirs. It is this organic form of mercury that is a threat to humans when ingested in fish tissue at concentrations higher than recommended amounts. Inorganic mercury is found in reservoirs and lakes around the state in very small amounts and small mercury concentrations in water are not a threat to humans when ingested.