

For Immediate Release  
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### **State health officials post fish advisory for Lake Nantahala in Macon County**

RALEIGH – The North Carolina Division of Public Health has issued a fish consumption advisory for Lake Nantahala in Macon County. Health officials warn residents to avoid eating smallmouth bass, walleye, yellow perch and largemouth bass caught in the lake due to elevated levels of mercury.

Testing has confirmed that elevated levels of mercury are present in smallmouth bass, walleye, and yellow perch in Lake Nantahala. Previous studies have already found elevated levels of mercury in largemouth bass in all North Carolina waters.

State health officials advise all pregnant, nursing, or women of childbearing age (15-44 years of age) not eat any smallmouth bass, walleye, yellow perch or largemouth bass caught in Lake Nantahala. Children under age 15 should also not consume any smallmouth bass, walleye, yellow perch and largemouth bass caught in the lake. The general public (men 15 years or older and women greater than 44 years of age) should limit their consumption to one meal per week from smallmouth bass, walleye, yellow perch and largemouth bass caught in Lake Nantahala. A meal is considered approximately six ounces of uncooked fish.

Mercury may adversely affect nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord, especially in unborn babies and young children. Prenatal mercury exposure can affect the way children think, learn and problem-solve later in life. Adverse health effects also can occur in adults at much higher doses.

The mercury contamination in the fish in Lake Nantahala does not present a known human health risk for people engaging in other recreational activities such as wading, swimming, boating or handling the fish. State health officials are unable to positively identify the original sources of the mercury contamination but have determined airborne deposits such as wind blown dust are the most likely source.

For more information go to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services' Fish Consumption Advisories website at [www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/fish](http://www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/fish), or call the North Carolina Division of Public Health at 919-707-5900.

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