

Date: April 7, 2008

Warning issued on eating fish from parts of Neuse River and its tributaries in Wake County

RALEIGH – Because of PCB contamination, North Carolina public health officials are warning people in Wake County to eat no more than one meal a month of carp or catfish from parts of the Neuse River, Walnut Creek and Rocky Branch, and no more than one meal a week of all other fish caught in Walnut Creek and Rocky Branch.

The advisories cover the Neuse River from just below Crabtree Creek to Auburn-Knightdale Road, as well as Walnut Creek and Rocky Branch just upstream of the Neuse. Laboratory tests on fish from those waterways show high levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

These advisories are an extension of advisories previously issued for this area, beginning in 2003, due to high levels of PCBs. Those advisories warned people to not eat any fish from Brier Creek, Little Brier Creek and its tributaries and Brier Creek Reservoir; not eat any carp or catfish from Lake Crabtree and to limit consumption of other fish from that lake to one meal per month; and to limit consumption of carp, catfish and largemouth bass from Crabtree Creek to one meal per month. Those advisories are still in effect:

PCBs are pollutants that can cause health problems in people who eat the fish often. Eating fish contaminated with PCBs may increase people's risk of developing cancer, infections and skin problems. Pregnant or nursing women who regularly eat those fish have an increased risk of having children with learning deficiencies.

PCBs were once widely used as coolants and lubricants in electrical transformers. Although PCBs have not been manufactured or used in the United States since 1977, they can still be found in many old transformers and sometimes in sites where transformers were manufactured or stored.

State environmental officials routinely monitor North Carolina water and fish for environmental contaminants. Public health officials issue fish consumption advisories based on those findings. Information on this and other fish consumption advisories is available on the Internet at www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/fish.

People with questions regarding these fish advisories may contact the N.C. Division of Public Health's Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology Branch at 919-707-5900.