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Georgia EPD Approves Ogeechee River For Fish Consumption

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) announced today a decision to lift a fish consumption advisory for the Ogeechee River based on laboratory testing of fish tissue samples taken by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). A swimming advisory for the river was removed last Friday.

Advisories recommending people not swim in the river or eat fish taken from the river were posted May 22 after dead fish began appearing in the river in Screven and Bulloch counties. The advisory also applied to citizens in Bryan, Chatham and Effingham counties as more dead fish were found downstream.

“Based on laboratory analysis, fish caught in the Ogeechee River are safe to eat,” said Jim Ussery, Assistant EPD Director. “Even though we are lifting the advisories for swimming and fish consumption, this does not mean our investigation has ended. We will continue to look for the cause of the fish kill.”

Whole body fish tissue was analyzed from large-mouth bass, bullhead catfish, bowfin and pickerel. These samples represent a range of ecological niches. Citizens are reminded that fish consumption guidelines for the Ogeechee that were in place prior to this incident call for certain restrictions due to mercury.

EPD has already announced that the fish died of Columnaris, a bacterial disease caused by environmental stress. Columnaris is not known to affect humans, but citizens with health questions should contact their personal physicians.

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