

May 13, 2011

**MSDH, MDEQ, MDWFP TIPS ON FISH CONSUMPTION FROM
FLOODED AREAS**
***FISH CONSUMPTION AND SAFETY ADVICE FOR MISSISSIPPI RIVER AND
BACKWATER FLOODING***

(JACKSON, Miss.) -- The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH), the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks (MDWFP) recommend that people use caution and common sense when fishing, or eating fish from, the floodwaters of the Mississippi River and its tributaries. The historic Mississippi River Flood of 2011 has damaged farms, homes and businesses and has put water onto places that have not been underwater in decades. Anyone thinking about fishing these areas needs to be aware of the following issues:

- In response to Executive Order 1053 issued by Gov. Haley Barbour, the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks has closed all boating activity in counties affected by the recent flooding including: Adams, Bolivar, Claiborne, Coahoma, DeSoto, Jefferson, Humphreys, Issaquena, Sharkey, Tunica, Warren, Washington, Wilkinson, and Yazoo. This area will be expanded as needed.
- Floodwaters may have strong currents and unseen hazards under the surface of the water.
- Floodwaters often have high levels of bacteria as a result of flooded sewage systems and the decay of plant and animals that have been killed during the flood.
- Floodwaters may contain oil, gas, diesel, fertilizers or other chemicals.

While there is no data showing that fish from the floodwaters are unsafe to eat, people should use common sense and observe the following precautions:

- Don't eat fish or crawfish that come out of an oil, gas or diesel slick.
- Don't eat fish or crawfish that don't look normal. For example, fish with sores, tumors, or discoloration.
- Don't eat fish or crawfish that don't act normally. For example, fish that are gasping for breath at the surface, swimming erratically, or that are dead or dying.
- Don't eat fish or crawfish that smell unusual--such as sewage, diesel or chemical odor.
- If they taste funny, throw them out.
- Handle fish and crawfish from floodwaters carefully. Avoid hand to mouth, nose or eye contact and wash hands thoroughly after handling uncooked fish or crawfish from flooded areas.
- Cook fish and crawfish thoroughly to kill any bacteria that may be present.

The safest thing to do is to avoid the flooded areas.

For more information or questions, contact the Mississippi State Department of Health (1-866-458-4948), the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (601-961-5171), or Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (601-432-2400).

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