



COOSA
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KEEPING WATCH OVER
OUR WATERS SINCE 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fishing for Answers on Where Your Family Can Safely Eat Fish from the Coosa? Now includes Spanish Translations!

Coosa Riverkeeper is working to address the language barriers in the current fish consumption advisory program to ensure that every family has access to this critical public health information.

MT LAUREL, ALA. – Coosa Riverkeeper updated its popular statewide toll-free hotline for fish consumption advisories in Spanish and in English, the first of its kind in Alabama. The Alabama Department of Public Health, the entity in charge of releasing the advisories, only releases the advisories in English and on an online document, not accounting for any language, literacy, or technological barriers. After four years of only being available in English, **Spanish-speaking communities can now call 1-844-219-7475 and hear the state-issued consumption recommendations for every waterway in Alabama in Spanish at the end of each extension.**

In addition to the statewide fish consumption advisory hotline, Coosa Riverkeeper has been working on translating program frequently asked questions, forms to report pollution, safe swimming tips, and more to ensure the Hispanic and Latino populations in Alabama can know how to recreate safely on the Coosa. Coosa Riverkeeper is actively working on more translation projects such as recipe cards and cooking videos, all aiming to teach Spanish-speaking communities how to reduce their exposure to contaminants from fish consumption advisories. Coosa Riverkeeper is also working on posting physical signage in English and Spanish at locations with many advisories in the Choccolocco Creek watershed, where the most advisories are present in the Coosa River watershed to ensure anglers are seeing this critical information. You can see Coosa Riverkeeper's Spanish webpage at CoosaRiver.org/Espanol.

“No matter who you are or what you look like, you deserve to know this critical public health information. These advisories are for known harmful contaminants and the public should be able to find this information quickly and easily to prevent unknowingly consuming harmful contaminants while eating fish,” said Abby Brown, Coosa Riverkeeper's Outreach Manager.

Earlier this summer, the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) released its annual [fish consumption advisories](#), which highlight the state's recommended limits on the consumption of different species of fish found in Alabama's rivers and streams. **Of the 227 advisories issued across 158 waterbodies in Alabama, 35 of these consumption advisories were listed on the Coosa River and its lakes.**

After catching and testing certain types of fish, the state issues the consumption advisories to warn anglers NOT to consume fish that are contaminated with dangerous pollutants [like polychlorinated biphenyls \(PCBs\) and methylmercury](#). Many of the advisories warn the public not to eat **any** fish from the specific waterbody, while others recommend limiting exposure to **one or two meals per month**.

There are no fish consumption advisories issued for Neely Henry Lake, Lake Mitchell, or Lake Jordan. Advisories for PFOS, an emerging contaminant, is listed on Weiss Lake which is known for its crappie fisheries. There are many fish consumption advisories on Logan Martin Lake and Lay Lake for PCBs and methylmercury.

“The Coosa River is known to many for its fantastic fishing, but there is significant legacy pollution beneath the surface of our river from PCBs, a known carcinogen,” says Justinn Overton, Coosa Riverkeeper’s Executive Director and Staff Riverkeeper. “91% of fishers we surveyed said they would heed the consumption advisories if they knew what they were. We hope our work on this issue educates families to fish safely and reduce their exposure to contaminants. Fishing is an important tradition for our culture and state.”

Coosa Riverkeeper has updated their popular Fish Guide program to include the 2022 advisories. Fish Guide was developed over several years as a response to surveys conducted with more than 250 anglers along the Coosa River. The purpose of Fish Guide is to educate anglers throughout the state of the fish consumption advisories at their favorite fishing holes. In addition to providing them with information about the fish consumption advisories each year, the program also features a toll-free hotline for anglers to immediately hear the advisories throughout Alabama. That hotline has now been updated with the 2022 advisories.

To learn more about the toxins in our fish and rivers, ways to reduce your exposure, and for more information about Fish Guide, please visit www.CoosaRiver.org/FishGuide.

Additional information, including photos and interviews, available upon request

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