

*July 8, 2009*

## **DSHS Issues Fish Advisory for Clear Creek**

The Texas Department of State Health Services has issued an advisory warning people not to consume any species of fish from Clear Creek. The creek runs through parts of Brazoria, Fort Bend, Galveston and Harris counties.

The advisory was issued after laboratory testing showed elevated levels of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, in fish samples collected from the creek.

DSHS tested tissue samples from seven species of fish as part of a reevaluation of the creek. The creek previously was under a 1993 advisory for elevated levels of volatile organic compounds. That advisory was lifted in 2001.

Long-term consumption of PCBs may cause cancer and reproductive, immune system, developmental and liver problems. According to DSHS standards, PCB levels in fish above 0.047 parts per million (ppm) may pose a health risk to humans. PCB levels in the most recent Clear Creek samples averaged 0.100 ppm and were as high as 0.676 ppm.

PCBs are industrial chemicals once used as coolants and lubricants in electrical transformers and capacitors. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency banned PCBs in 1979, but items containing PCBs did not have to be replaced. PCBs degrade slowly in the environment.

Elevated levels of PCBs in fish do not pose a health risk for people swimming, fishing or participating in other water recreation activities in Clear Creek.

A July 2008 advisory remains in place for Galveston Bay and its contiguous waters, including Clear Creek, due to elevated levels of dioxins and PCBs in spotted sea trout and catfish.