



For Immediate Release

February 4, 2020

For More Information:

Av Harris av.harris@ct.gov
(860) 509-7270

**DPH UPDATES ADVISORY FOR FISH CAUGHT IN
FARMINGTON RIVER; RESIDENTS NOW CAUTIONED TO
CONSUME NO MORE THAN ONE MEAL PER MONTH**

**DPH REMOVES ANY RESTRICTIONS ON CONSUMPTION OF SHAD; PREVIOUS
ADVISORY NOT TO CONSUME FISH WAS IN PLACE FOLLOWING JUNE 2019 SPILL OF
FIREFIGHTING FOAM INTO FARMINGTON RIVER**

Hartford – The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) today is updating the consumption advisory for fish caught in the Farmington River that has been in place since June 2019 in response to a June 2019 spill of approximately 40,000 gallons of fire-suppressing Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) into the river from the Signature Flight Hangar at Bradley International Airport. The foam contained per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS), and DPH had previously issued an advisory not to consume fish caught in the Farmington River downstream from the Rainbow Dam in the Town of Windsor to the confluence with the Connecticut River due to elevated levels of PFAS collected in fish tissue samples.

Based on the most recent test results of fish tissue, DPH is now advising the public to limit fish consumption to no more than one meal per month. DPH advises that it is especially important for people in more sensitive groups (pregnant women, children under the age of 12 and women planning to become pregnant in the next year) to follow this advice. American shad caught in the Farmington River are not included in this advisory, and therefore there is no restriction on consumption of this species caught in the Farmington River.

The updated fish consumption advisory for the Farmington River is based on validated test results of fish samples from the lower Farmington River received by DPH and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection confirming that PFAS levels in the fish tissue have decreased compared to earlier samples taken in July. The most recent fish samples were collected in September from the Farmington River downstream of the MDC Poquonock Waste Water Treatment Facility where the AFFF was discharged into the river. Signature Flight took responsibility immediately after the release and retained a consultant to assess the environmental impacts as required by DEEP and DPH, including fish sampling from the river.

In July 2019, Signature Flight's consultant collected 70 fish (two species, yellow perch and white sucker) from two areas along the lower portion of the Farmington River – one above and one below where the AFFF release entered the river in the town of Windsor. Tissue samples collected downriver from the release of chemicals showed PFAS levels at 172 parts per billion (ppb). This exceeded the level of 159 ppb considered by DPH to be safe for human consumption. A second round of testing was conducted in September 2019 of 70 fish of the same species (yellow perch and white sucker). The fish collected downstream from where AFFF entered the Farmington River found PFAS levels measuring 62 ppb, a decline of more than 50% from samples taken in July and well within safe consumption limit of 1 fish meal per month.

The second round of fish tissue sampling was conducted in late September from the Farmington River – prior to a plane crash October 2, 2019 at Bradley International Airport during which time AFFF was used to extinguish the fire. Potential PFAS impacts to Farmington River and fish from this second AFFF release are expected to be minimal because the quantity of AFFF used to fight the October 2 fire was less than the amount accidentally released from the Signature Flight hangar in June, and measures were put in place to contain the diluted AFFF immediately following the fire.

Adult size American shad are found in the Farmington River from April until June each year and generally spend most of their lives in the ocean. The shad that will be returning to the Farmington River in the spring of 2020 were not likely exposed to the PFAS releases that occurred in the lower Farmington River in June and October of 2019. For this reason, shad can be eaten with more frequency than one meal per month.

Long term exposure to PFAS may be associated with increased cholesterol levels, a change in immune response, developmental effects, increased chance of thyroid disease and an increased chance of cancer, especially kidney and testicular cancers.

Future sampling of fish from the Farmington River may occur and this consumption advisory may be revised if lower levels of PFAS in the fish tissue are found.

Additional information on DPH fish consumption advisories can be found at: <https://portal.ct.gov/fish> or by calling a DPH staff person at 1-877-458-FISH (3474).