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P R E S S R E L E A S E

DPH continues fish consumption advisory on lower Farmington River downstream from Rainbow Dam based on validated data from the June 8 AFFF spill

The Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) have received validated test results of fish tissue samples taken in July from the lower Farmington River that confirm the presence of per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) at levels higher than considered safe for human consumption. Therefore, the advisory not to consume fish caught in the Farmington River downstream from the Rainbow Dam to the confluence with the Connecticut River remains in effect.

The fish tissue was collected downstream of the MDC Poquonock Waste Water Treatment Facility following spill of aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) that occurred at a Signature Flight hangar at Bradley International Airport on June 8, 2019. Signature Flight took responsibility immediately after the release and retained a consultant to assess the environmental impacts as required by DEEP, including fish tissue sampling from the river.

Signature Flight’s consultant collected a total of 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. PFAS levels in fish collected below the point where AFFF entered the river (172 parts per billion [ppb]) were markedly higher in comparison to the fish collected above the point of entry to the river (24.3 ppb). PFAS concentrations in fish sampled near the point of entry exceed safe levels for fish consumption.

Additional signage is posted along the Farmington River downstream from Rainbow Dam notifying the public of the fish consumption advisory. The public can continue to catch and release fish from this portion of the Farmington River downstream from the Rainbow Dam and also continue to kayak and boat on the river. There is no specific fish advisory due to PFAS for the upper section of Farmington River upstream from Rainbow Dam.

“These data validate the precautionary measures we took over the summer to advise the public not to consume fish taken from this area of the Farmington River,” said Brian Toal, interim chief of Environmental Health at the Connecticut Department of Public Health. “These samples were taken at a point in time following the spill event and it is likely that the PFAS levels detected in fish may decline as additional fish tissue samples are collected and analyzed. Until then, the advisory for the lower Farmington River remains in effect.”

A second round of fish tissue sampling was conducted in late September from the Farmington River – prior to the October 2 plane crash at Bradley International Airport – and those results are expected before the end of the year. These results will be used in conjunction with the July data to determine if the fish consumption advisory should be modified and if additional sampling along the Farmington River is necessary. Additional information on DPH fish consumption advisories can be found at: <https://portal.ct.gov/fish> or by calling 1-877-458-FISH (3474).

On October 1, a state PFAS task force, appointed by Governor Lamont, released a draft action plan identifying a number of recommended actions that can be taken to address PFAS in our communities. PFAS are a group of more than 4,700 man-made chemicals widely used in consumer products such as nonstick cookware, waterproof apparel, stain-resistant textiles and carpets, personal care products, cleaners, waxes, and food packaging materials. The Draft PFAS Action Plan is available for public review online at www.ct.gov/CTPFASTaskForce.

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