



NEIL GOLDSCHMIDT
GOVERNOR

Department of Human Resources

HEALTH DIVISION

1400 SW 5th AVENUE, PORTLAND, OREGON 97201

VOICE: 229-5821

TDD-NONVOICE: (503) 229-5497

December 12, 1989

Ray Temple, Manager
Warm Water Miscellaneous Species Program
Fish Division
Oregon Fish & Wildlife Department
506 SW Mill Street
Portland, Oregon 97201

Dear Mr. Temple:

This is to follow up on our interagency meeting of December 5, 1989 and to revise our recommendations regarding mercury levels found in fish from Antelope Reservoir, Jordan Creek, and Owyhee Reservoir in Malheur County.

As you recall, on December 19, 1988, we recommended that sport fishing advisories be issued regarding unsafe mercury levels in fish tested from both Owyhee and Antelope Reservoirs. No advisories were issued because a special sampling project was undertaken to ascertain whether the levels measured to that date were accurate and truly representative of the wider fish populations.

We now have the results of that additional testing, and the results have altered our recommendations as follows:

Antelope Reservoir and Jordan Creek

Considering the results of tests performed by the private laboratory together with the findings of the Department of Environmental Quality laboratory, we conclude that there is an even greater hazard from fish in Antelope Reservoir and Jordan Creek than observed in 1987-1988. The latest results from the DEQ laboratory show that the levels of mercury in fish tested from the Antelope system range from 2.41 mg/kg to 3.57 mg/kg with a mean value of 2.9 mg/kg. This is almost 3 times the level allowable by U.S. FDA for commercial fish products, and these levels pose a significant risk of mercury toxicity to sportfish consumers. We recommend that a warning be published in the anglers guide and posted prominently by signs located at public access points to Antelope Reservoir and Jordan Creek extending to its confluence with Owyhee River. The notice should read as follows:

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 231, Portland, OR 97207

Emergency Phone Voice (503) 229-5599 — TDD-Nonvoice (503) 252-7978

ATTENTION FISHERMEN

The State Health Division has determined that fish taken from these waters contain mercury in potentially hazardous quantities. To avoid serious health effects you should limit consumption as follows:

- A. Pregnant Women, children 6 years old or younger and adults with kidney or liver damage should not eat any fish taken here;
- B. Children between 6 and 16 years of age should not eat more than 1/6 pound (2 1/2 ounces) of fish from here per month;
- C. Healthy adults should not eat more than 1/3 pound (5.3 ounces) of fish from here per month.

Oregon Health Division
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

We urge that these notices be issued and posted as soon as physically possible.

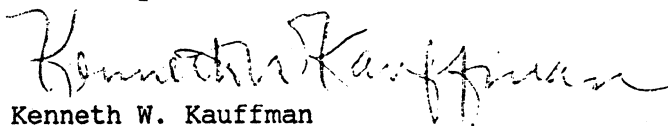
Owyhee Reservoir

The testing data developed during the current study of fish from the Owyhee River and Reservoir are not complete as outlined in the attached meeting summary, and at this point we are not certain whether they will warrant similar action. You will recall that we considered the 1987-1988 tests sufficient to require public notices, but our recommended consumption limits were less restrictive than those we are now recommending for the Antelope drainage.

We will await further information regarding the Owyhee system before commenting further.

Please call me if you want to discuss this recommendation or related matters.

Sincerely,



Kenneth W. Kauffman
Environmental Specialist
Non-Communicable Disease Section

cc: Bartels, Buckman, Herrig, Griggs, Temple, Daily,
Hosford, - Fish and Wildlife

Eugene Foster, DEQ, Water Quality
Ray Huff, Malheur County Health Department