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Around the Lakes

Low-level fish advisory doesn't change recommended fish consumption at Badin Lake

The N.C. Division of Public Health has issued a low-level fish advisory for Badin Lake that reiterates its recommendation that residents should limit their consumption of largemouth bass and catfish to no more than once a week. Pregnant women, nursing mothers and children under 15 should not eat these fish at all.

"This advisory does not change the current recommendations for eating fish in Badin Lake," said Sandy Mort, Coordinator Health Assessment, Consultation & Education Program, for the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services. "There is already an existing advisory to limit consumption of bass and catfish due to mercury that affects bass statewide and catfish in waters south and east of I-85."

It remains safe to continue fishing, swimming and boating in Badin Lake.

This study — the most sophisticated study of fish tissue ever conducted in North Carolina — found slightly elevated levels of PCBs in one largemouth bass and three catfish out of 30 fish that were sampled. Given the prevalence of PCBs in every waterway in America, Gene Ellis, relicensing and property manager for Alcoa Power Generating Inc. (APGI), said it is not surprising that a highly sensitive study would find a few fish with slightly elevated levels. If the State used the same procedures to test fish in other lakes and rivers in North Carolina, it would likely find similar levels of PCBs in fish from those waters.

Upstream sources of contamination deserve attention

The study did not identify any potential sources of contamination, but three of the four fish with elevated levels were located in the northwest portion of the lake, upstream of the Badin Works plant. In addition, previous testing by the North Carolina Division of Water Quality has shown the presence of PCBs in the Yadkin River upstream of Badin Lake.

Department of Health officials stated in the public meeting held Wednesday that, although this study wasn't designed to determine sources, since the majority of fish with contamination were caught in the northwest part of the lake, that it would make sense to check upstream for sources of the contamination.

Fish advisory should not impact water quality application

APGI does not expect the fish advisory to impact its application for a Section 401 water quality certificate for the Yadkin Hydroelectric Project. "There's no relationship between the fish advisory and the quality of water being discharged from our dams," Ellis said. "The 401 water quality certificate focuses exclusively on the quality of water being discharged from our dams and we are confident that the

Relicensing Update

Yadkin Project awaits water quality permit

After more than six years, the relicensing of the Yadkin Project is nearly complete. There is only one major milestone left — receiving a water quality certificate from the State of North Carolina — before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) can issue a new, long-term license for the Yadkin Project.

The water quality certificate signifies that discharges from the Yadkin Project dams will meet North Carolina's water quality standards.

"Water quality has been an important focus of the relicensing process from the beginning. Independent consultants have conducted numerous studies of the Yadkin River water quality and based on this information we are confident that discharges from the Yadkin Project dams will meet water quality standards in North Carolina," said Gene Ellis, relicensing and property manager for Alcoa Power Generating Inc. (APGI).

APGI has already begun investing in new equipment as part of a \$240 million plan to upgrade the Yadkin Project's power generators, increase dissolved oxygen levels and improve water quality along the Yadkin River.

Recent testing demonstrated that the investment in new technology is already making an impact — dissolved oxygen levels are increasing and water quality is improving. Additional sampling shows that discharges from the Narrows powerhouse at Badin Lake meet other water quality standards.

The State of North Carolina will accept comments on this issue until February 16, 2009. It can issue a water quality certificate as early as March 16, 2009 and must take action by May 7, 2009.

Yadkin Project will meet all relevant water quality standards.”

A recent water test conducted as part of the 401 process has confirmed that no PCBs were detected in the Badin Lake water — nor were any other contaminants found — confirming prior results that have regularly shown that the water quality in Badin Lake is good and in compliance with applicable North Carolina water quality standards.

Badin Lake water levels won't be affected by relicensing agreement

There has been a lot of speculation recently about how the relicensing agreement may impact water levels at Badin Lake in the future. What many people do not realize is that Alcoa-Yadkin has absolutely no plans to change the way it operates Badin Lake during normal weather conditions.

“We've always tried to maintain Badin Lake water levels within three feet of full on average, and that remains our plan moving forward,” Ellis said.

The relicensing agreement includes some slight changes in how Alcoa-Yadkin is required to operate Badin Lake, but those changes actually represent an improvement for homeowners and recreational users. The agreement requires water levels at Badin Lake to remain within 5 feet of full during normal weather conditions. That's more stringent than the requirements in the current license, which allows water levels at Badin Lake to drop more than 6½ feet below full whenever water levels High Rock Lake are less than 1 foot below full.

Since 1986, water levels at Badin Lake have remained within 3 feet of full (on average) and have only dropped more than 3 feet below full 8.3% of the time. Alcoa-Yadkin expects similar water levels at Badin Lake in the future.

There will be some slight changes at Badin Lake when drought conditions are present. Water levels at all large storage reservoirs on the Yadkin River (including Badin Lake) may be temporarily dropped below normal in order to send water downstream as required by the federal government. However, Alcoa-Yadkin is required to reduce power generation and send less water downstream to help maintain higher water levels during droughts.

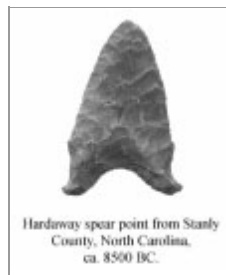
What kind of changes will relicensing bring to Badin Lake?

1. Water levels at Badin Lake will remain within 3 feet of full (on average) during normal weather conditions.
2. A revised Shoreline Management Plan will give Badin Lake homeowners greater flexibility to build piers on the lake.
3. A new waterfront park in Badin will be developed on land donated by Alcoa-Yadkin.
4. Alcoa-Yadkin will be required to reduce its power generation and send less water downstream during droughts to help maintain higher water levels.
5. The City of Albemarle will be allowed to increase the amount of drinking water it withdraws from Badin Lake.

In the Community

The Ancient Carolinians: Traveling exhibit debuts at Badin Museum, showcases local artifacts

Stanly County was chosen as the first stop for a statewide museum exhibit that examines the lives of North Carolina's earliest known inhabitants. “The Ancient Carolinians,” an exhibit developed by researchers at the University of North Carolina with funding from the Alcoa Foundation, is on display at the Badin Firehouse Museum through April 28, 2009. Admission is free.



Alcoa earns praise for ethics

Alcoa may be best known as the world's largest aluminum producer, but the company is well known for its ethics, too. The company was ranked as one of the world's ten most ethical companies in the 2008 Covalence Ethical Ranking, a methodology that gauges the reputation of international companies. Alcoa has been ranked in the Top 10 since the rankings began in 2005.

Alcoa pushes for climate change initiatives

As a founding member of the U.S. Climate Action Partnership, Alcoa helped launch the Blueprint for Legislative Action, a climate protection initiative that includes policy recommendations for developing legislation to address climate change. This provides a framework for the Obama Administration and the U.S. Congress to enact legislation that will protect the environment and the economy. The proposal would reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by 80% of 2005 levels by 2050 through a mandatory cap-and-trade program.

Did You Know?

The relicensing of the Yadkin Project will not limit the State of North Carolina's ability in any way to withdraw water from the Yadkin River. State law gives North Carolina the authority to regulate water use within the Yadkin River, including the right to issue new water withdrawal permits (withdrawals of more than 1 million gallons per day are regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission). This means that North Carolina will always have access water from the Yadkin River.

This electronic newsletter is designed to keep the community informed about important issues related to the relicensing of the Yadkin Project.

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The exhibit can be viewed each Tuesday (9:00 am – 3:00 pm) and Sunday (2:00-5:00 pm) through April 28, 2009. The museum is located at 60 Falls Road in Badin.

“The Ancient Carolinians” uses artifacts from the historic Hardaway site in Stanly County to provide an intriguing look into the lives of people who lived here more than 12,000 years ago. The Hardaway site, located in the shadows of Morrow Mountain, is the oldest excavated settlement in North Carolina and one of the oldest and most significant archaeological sites in North America. The site was discovered in the 1940’s by an Alcoa engineer. More than 1.5 million artifacts were uncovered by archaeologists and donated by Alcoa to the University of North Carolina.

“This exhibit allows you to step into the past and see how North Carolina’s first people lived,” said David Summerlin, chairman of the Badin Historic Museum. “It’s amazing that these historic artifacts were discovered right here in Stanly County and we are thrilled to have the opportunity to give people in central North Carolina a first look at this exhibit.”

Schools and other organizations can arrange group tours of “The Ancient Carolinians” by calling (704) 422-6900 or (704) 422-3713. Call now to reserve your place in North Carolina history.

Environmental Spotlight

Relicensing agreement addresses key issues along the Yadkin River

What are the most important issues to the long-term health of the Yadkin River? That’s a question that was tackled in a 26-page report by [Clean Water for North Carolina](#), a private, non-profit organization that studies environmental issues.

The 2002 report specifically highlights several areas of concern that should be addressed during the relicensing of dams along the Yadkin River, including:

- **Strict shoreline protections and curbs on development.** The Yadkin Project has a comprehensive Shoreline Management Plan that is held up as a model by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the responsible manner it helps to protect the reservoirs against the environmental impacts of development along the shore.
- **Shoreline areas should be identified for permanent protection.** The relicensing agreement will provide for long-term land protection through the donation or sale of more than 6,000 acres adjacent to the Yadkin Project. This land will be used for conservation, recreation and game lands.
- **Flows should approach natural conditions.** The relicensing agreement provides for a consistent daily flow of water to support fish habitat and the environment.
- **Fish passage should be enhanced through the retro-fitting of fish ladders or through a hauling system to take fish around dams.** The state and federal agencies that manage fish passage issues have reserved the right to evaluate the need for fish passage at the Yadkin Project dams, when and if migratory fish are passed upstream of the two Progress Energy dams that are located downstream of the Yadkin dams.

This demonstrates how the Relicensing Settlement Agreement for the Yadkin Project effectively addresses the issues raised in this report.



Life jackets save lives.