

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Survey Results Show Extensive Ohio River Recreation and Fish Consumption

A survey carried out by the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO) has found that several million adults and children use the Ohio River every year for recreation ranging from fishing and power boating to kayaking, swimming, and diving. Additionally, according to the survey, over 13 million pounds of Ohio River fish are consumed every year by residents along the river, not including fish harvested by the commercial fishing industry.

ORSANCO commissioned the recreation and fish consumption survey following the public's response to a proposal in 2006 to weaken the Ohio River's bacteria standards following a rain event, under the assumption that the public does not and should not recreate during this time. Wet weather standards are designed to relieve the burden on combined sewage overflow (CSO) communities along the Ohio to meet the bacteria standard during the recreation season of May thru October when sanitary systems may reach maximum capacity and cause overflows of raw sewage.

"The survey underscores what we've known for years, that recreation and fish consumption along the Ohio River is increasing. We all need to work together to find ways to keep bacteria and other toxins out of the water," said Judy Petersen, executive director, Kentucky Waterways Alliance.

The survey revealed interesting trends in the public's attitude and behavior toward recreating on the Ohio River. More recreation occurs in April, when recreation standards do not apply, than in October when standards are stricter. Despite public warnings to avoid Ohio River recreation following a rain event (when water bacteria levels are typically high) approximately 45% of survey respondents answered that post-rain river conditions and unsafe bacteria levels did not deter them from Ohio River recreation. Twelve segments of the Ohio host significantly more public recreation than popular bathing beaches at state reservoirs.

These revelations should motivate ORSANCO to extend the recreation season to include April and to strengthen wet weather standards in order to protect public health.

ORSANCO plans to publically release the recreation and fish consumption survey as part of a series of workshops. Dates for the workshops are listed below and each will be held from 4 to 7 pm (local time).

Pittsburgh area—Tuesday, March 16
Holiday Inn Meadlowlands
340 Racetrack Road
Washington, PA

Cincinnati area—Tuesday, March 23
Holiday Inn Airport
1717 Airport Exchange Blvd.
Erlanger, KY

Huntington area—Wednesday, March 17
Pullman Plaza
1001 Third Ave.
Huntington, WV

Evansville area—Wednesday, March 24
Aztar Hotel
421 N.W. Riverside Dr.
Evansville, IN

For additional information, visit the Kentucky Waterways Alliance's (www.KWAlliance.org) or the West Virginia Rivers Coalition's (www.WVRC.org) websites.

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