

Fact Sheet on Kerr Lake

Several weeks after the Feb. 2 coal ash release into the Dan River in Eden, N.C., local citizens have reported what appeared to be deposits of coal ash in the John H. Kerr Reservoir, downstream of the spill.

Most of the coal ash was seen in areas upstream of the reservoir, but the Environmental Protection Agency is collecting water and sediment samples from the reservoir itself to determine if any low levels of coal ash are present.

DENR is awaiting test results from the Environmental Protection Agency. The federal agency has certified some results regarding metals. Those are discussed in the fact sheet that the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services has posted to its website this afternoon at: <http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/oe/hace/docs/KerrReservoirCoalAshFactSheet.pdf> (see the information about boating and swimming in Kerr Lake).

The EPA will be releasing more results from sampling it has been conducting at more than 20 sites throughout Kerr Reservoir. Those sites are in Virginia. Also, the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources has conducted surface water sampling and fish collection at Satterwhite Point in North Carolina to determine any environmental impacts and impacts to fish in Kerr Lake.

Sampling of water quality, sediments and fish tissues will continue in Kerr Lake for as long as necessary to make sure the lake is safe for recreational uses. Health officials will continue to provide any updates if needed.

However, if a swimmer comes in contact with what appears to be coal ash, health officials recommend thoroughly washing off with soap and water. Illness may occur from other lake water contaminants not associated with coal ash, such as bacteria and viruses. For that reason, it is important that swimmers always avoid swallowing any untreated or unfiltered lake water. If you swallow lake water and become ill, please seek medical attention.

Due to historical activities not associated with the coal ash release, the Virginia Department of Health and N.C. Department of Health and Human Services have existing fish consumption advisories for the Kerr Reservoir. These advisories remain in effect. For more information on fish consumption advisories for Virginia, go to: <http://1.usa.gov/111utLL>. For information on fish consumption advisories in North Carolina, visit: <http://bit.ly/PteRBy>.

If you come into contact with what appears to be coal ash, wash off with soap and water. Do not kick the ash up and do not try to remove it yourself. If you see what appears to be ash on the banks of the reservoir, contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at JHKERR@usace.army.mil.

For health related questions in Virginia, please contact the Southside Health District at 434-738-6815 or 434-799-5190 with questions about swimming, boating or fishing in the Kerr Reservoir. In North Carolina, you may contact the Division of Public Health at 919-707-5900.