



Governor Ted Strickland
Lieutenant Governor Lee Fisher
Director Robert J. Boggs

Office of Communication
8995 East Main Street, Reynoldsburg, OH 43068
Phone: 614-752-9817 • Fax: 614-466-7754
www.agri.ohio.gov • communications@agri.ohio.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Agriculture and Natural Resources Departments Protect Ohio's Fish

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (June 9, 2009) – The Ohio Department of Agriculture and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources have joined forces to protect Ohio's fish populations, both wild and farmed, from the fish disease Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS).

VHS is a disease that must be reported to the Department of Agriculture under state law. It is not harmful to humans and cannot be transferred from fish to humans through consumption. It is believed to have been introduced to the Great Lakes region through invasive species in water exchanged from ship ballast.

Due to the recent confirmation of VHS in the Mansfield Clear Fork Reservoir, Agriculture Director Robert Boggs modified the existing emergency proclamation, which prohibits the intrastate transportation, sale or distribution of 28 fish species susceptible to VHS out of the affected region, to include Clear Fork Reservoir along with the existing area in northern Ohio. The proclamation, originally issued in May 2008, has also been revised to include the ban of intrastate distribution of VHS susceptible bait fish, living or dead, along with living fish and non-disinfected live eggs that are used for fish production. However, non-fertilized eggs may be used as bait in the tributaries of Lake Erie.

“Aquaculture in Ohio is a small, but growing segment of the state's agriculture industry, bringing in \$3.1 million in sales,” said Boggs. “Together, with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, we are able to uphold our mission to protect our fish from disease and preserve this valuable industry.”

The ban includes areas in Ohio north of U.S. Highway 6 from the Indiana border to the intersection of U.S. Highway 6 and Interstate 90 near Freemont, continuing on I-90 to the Pennsylvania border and the Sandusky River south of U.S. Highway 6 to Ballville Dam. The area also includes Clear Fork Reservoir in Mansfield, Ohio.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources continues to protect the state's wild fish populations which make annual economic contributions of \$1.8 billion through sport fisheries and an additional \$3.5 million through commercial harvest. Surveillance of Ohio's lakes and rivers has allowed the state to monitor prevalence of the disease and was responsible for identifying VHS in Clear Fork Reservoir. Research, public education, and disinfection procedures have prevented introduction of the disease to State Fish Hatcheries and minimized risk of spreading the disease.

-more-



“This represents a good example of management that balances the protection with the wise use of our natural resources,” said ODNR Director Sean Logan. “Through this kind of cooperative action, we are improving the sustainability of this resource while strengthening the economic value of our fishery.”

In order to protect wild and agricultural fish, the Department of Natural Resources prohibits movement of wild, caught fish to other public waters and recommends that anglers refrain from stocking wild caught fish in private waters due to the risk of introducing parasites and diseases. Under the current proclamation, the Department of Agriculture further restricts movement of fish from public waters within the affected regions to all private waters.

The prohibition is in effect in Ohio until the U.S. Department of Agriculture's division of Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service releases its quarantine and restrictive movement of live VHS susceptible fish. The prohibition does not apply to live fish or eggs removed directly from production facilities that have tested negative for VHS. It also excludes live fish or eggs that are being transported for use by research scientists in closed research facilities or diagnostic laboratories.

-30-

*Media Contacts: Kaleigh Frazier, ODA Public Information Officer, 614-728-6211
Beth Ruth, ODNR Public Information Officer, 614-265-6860*

