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Contact: Justinn Overton, Executive Director, Coosa Riverkeeper: [justinn@coosariver.org](mailto:justinn@coosariver.org), 205.981.6565

**COOSA RIVERKEEPER LAUNCHES NEW FISH GUIDE PROGRAM FOR ALABAMA**  
*Program features a toll-free phone number for fishermen to hear advisories in their watershed*

BIRMINGHAM – Coosa Riverkeeper has developed a new program, FISH GUIDE, as a response to surveys conducted with more than 125+ fishermen on the Coosa River. In addition to providing fishermen with supplementary information about the fish consumption advisories, the new program also features a toll-free hotline for fishermen to immediately hear the advisories throughout the State.

In 2016, there were 34 fish consumption advisories on the Coosa River and its tributaries for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and methylmercury. The advisories are recommendations made by the Alabama Department of Public Health concerning the portion size and frequency of fish consumed in specific waterbodies throughout Alabama. According to Coosa Riverkeeper's surveys conducted with more than 125 fisherman on the Coosa River, nearly half of the fishermen were unaware of these advisories, and what it means for the health of themselves and their families.

Coosa Riverkeeper's FISH GUIDE program was created to educate fishermen throughout the state and alert them to the fish consumption advisories in their watershed. FISH GUIDE also offers multiple videos with alternatives to traditional preparations of the fish that reduce the risk of the dangerous toxins.

"In Alabama, our state motto is "We Dare to Defend Our Rights" but our fishermen and their families don't have a right to know where fish consumption advisories are in their local waterways. Nearly every river in Alabama -- The River State -- has fish consumption advisories," Justinn Overton, Executive Director of Coosa Riverkeeper said. "We saw a need for a better way to alert citizens of these advisories and were excited to tackle the challenge. We are confident our new toll-free hotline will be make these advisories more accessible and easier to understand for the hundreds of subsistence fishermen throughout the Coosa River and the entire state."

The program includes three main components. First, a toll-free hotline lists all advisories throughout the state, by watershed. Fisherman can simply call 1 844-219-RISK to hear the current fish consumption advisories throughout Alabama. Second, an interactive map of the Coosa River shows where to find all 34 fish consumption advisories, local marinas and bait shop, and public access points like boat ramps and canoe launches. Third, short videos demonstrate alternative ways to filet a fish and recipes that reduce exposure to dangerous legacy toxins like PCBs.

Several of Coosa Riverkeeper's partners across Alabama are sponsors of this free public service, including Alabama Rivers Alliance, Black Warrior Riverkeeper, Cahaba Riverkeeper, Choctawhatchee Riverkeeper, and Mobile Baykeeper.

"Alabamians have a right to eat the fish they catch, but if those fish aren't safe to eat they deserve to know that, said Nelson Brooke, Black Warrior Riverkeeper. "Every fisherman on Smith lake and Lake Tuscaloosa needs to know there are mercury fish consumption advisories on these lakes, so they can make informed decisions about where to fish and which fish are unsafe to eat - that is the purpose of FISH GUIDE."

To learn more about the toxins in our fish and rivers, and for more information about FISH GUIDE, please visit [www.CoosaRiver.org/FishGuide](http://www.CoosaRiver.org/FishGuide).

To view a high resolution picture of Camp McDowell's Rev. Mark Johnston fishing on Clear Creek in the Black Warrior River's Sipsey Fork watershed, click here: [blackwarriorriver.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ClearCreekFish.jpg](http://blackwarriorriver.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ClearCreekFish.jpg)

To share this press release online, please use this link: [blackwarriorriver.org/fish-guide/](http://blackwarriorriver.org/fish-guide/)

#### ABOUT COOSA RIVERKEEPER

Coosa Riverkeeper is a citizen-based river conservation group with a mission to protect, restore and promote the Coosa River and its tributaries in Alabama. Coosa Riverkeeper patrols the waters, educates the public, and advocates for the river. The organization was founded in 2010 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit in response to the Coosa River being listed by American Rivers as one of the ten most endangered rivers in the country due to the impacts of hydropower. For more information, please visit [www.CoosaRiver.org](http://www.CoosaRiver.org)

*Photos, survey results and additional information available upon request*

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