

Lower Watts Bar Reservoir Clinch River/Poplar Creek

Is it safe? _____

The Lower Watts Bar Reservoir and the Clinch River/Poplar Creek are safe for recreational uses such as boating, skiing, swimming, and fishing. Eating fish is safe as long as people avoid eating striped bass and limit consumption of catfish and sauger to one meal per month. Pregnant women, nursing mothers, women who might become pregnant, and children should not consume catfish and sauger from this body of water. Since the sediments are contaminated, dredging (e.g. for dock installation) requires a permit.

Are there use limitations for this area? _____

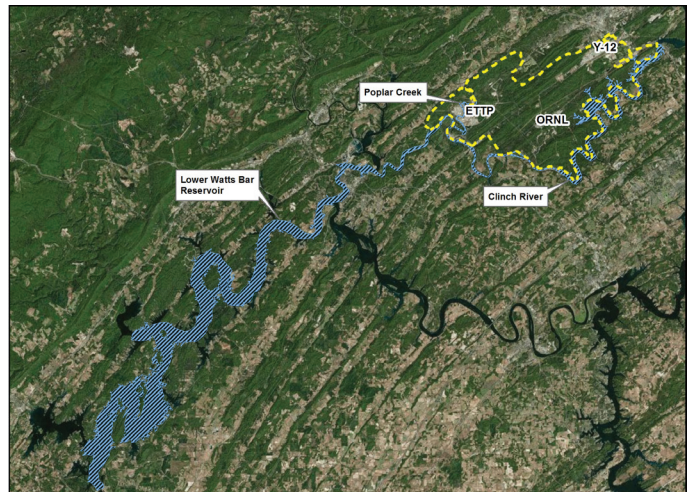
Due to the contamination in sediments and fish tissue, the following restrictions are in place:

- Dredging permit requests are reviewed by the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Department of Energy, and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation to locate and suppress the release of contaminants, if found.
- The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation issues advisories for the fish in the river and creek, and it posts advisories at boat launch locations. The advisories limit the type and amount of fish that can be eaten. The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency also provides this information in the annual fishing guide and online at <https://www.state.tn.us/twra>.

All controls and monitoring necessary for this area are performed and reported as required in the Remedial Action Report.

Background: _____

Activities performed on the Oak Ridge Reservation, since the early 1940s, contaminated the Clinch River, Poplar Creek, and the Lower Watts Bar Reservoir. The main river channel sediment contaminants include mercury, chromium, arsenic, and radionuclides. Bottom feeding fish contain contaminants such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), chlordane, arsenic, and mercury. DOE investigated two sections of the river. The area extends from the Solway Bridge to Kingston, where the Clinch River joins with the Tennessee River. Additionally, from that location to the Lower Watts Bar Dam.



The contaminants are located in deep-water sediments in the old river and creek channel. Any contaminants are generally buried under 8-32 inches of clean sediment.

How was the problem addressed? _____

The DOE, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the State of Tennessee conducted contamination investigations and evaluated alternatives to determine the best plan for handling impacts to the environment and to human health. The selected alternatives were captured in the two *Records of Decision* approved by the parties.

The contamination is controlled by restricting sediment dredging activities, by limiting the amount and types of fish eaten. Annual monitoring is performed by DOE to detect changes in contaminant levels and locations. The effectiveness of these controls and the monitoring results are reported annually in the *Remediation Effectiveness Report*.

Lower Watts Bar Reservoir (continued)

More Information is available: _____

- *Record of Decision for Lower Watts Bar Reservoir, Oak Ridge Tennessee.* September 29, 1995.
- *Record of Decision for Clinch River/Poplar Creek Operable Unit, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.* September 23, 1997.
- *Remedial Action Report for Clinch River in East Tennessee.* June 14, 1999.
- *Remedial Action Work Plan for Lower Watts Bar Reservoir in Tennessee.* March 1996.
- Administrative Record – a listing of all available documents and correspondence in reaching this decision is available at the DOE Information Center in Oak Ridge.