

News Release

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For Immediate Release

High Mercury Levels Found In Silver Creek Brown Trout

A study funded by The Nature Conservancy has revealed that brown trout in Silver Creek contain elevated levels of mercury, at times four times higher than the amount considered safe for consumption by pregnant women and children.

Conservancy staff reviewed raw data from the survey, conducted this year by the U.S. Geological Survey. The final report will be available in mid-December.

“We are very concerned about the level of mercury found,” says Dayna Gross, Silver Creek Preserve manager. “We need to move forward on gathering the facts on what these readings mean, and then we will undertake a course of action.”

The Nature Conservancy has worked at Silver Creek for 31 years, when it purchased a preserve along the stream. Since that time, it has worked with 22 landowners who have donated conservation easements on their land along Silver Creek—protecting much of the land along the world-famous trout stream from development.

The Conservancy pays very close attention to the health of the Silver Creek watershed. The study was funded by the Conservancy because we were aware of higher than normal mercury readings throughout southern Idaho.

Gross said that the Conservancy is also aware of nuances in the Silver Creek findings.

“Brown trout live a long time, and eat other fish,” she says. “Both factors impact mercury levels.”

The Conservancy believes that agencies must act when the interpretation of data is released. It is imperative that the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare must explain the public health issues associated with these mercury levels as soon as possible. The Nature Conservancy also requests that the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) determine the source of this mercury and act appropriately to control it within Idaho, or by working with neighboring states.

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The source of this mercury is not known at this time. That information will have to come from DEQ, and potentially may involve sources outside of Idaho.

Silver Creek Preserve annually draws visitors from all 50 states and more than a dozen countries, and is beloved by the local community. The Conservancy has committed to acting to protect the stream as it has for the past 31 years.

“Silver Creek has faced many conservation challenges over the years,” says Dayna Gross. “Whether it is invasion by non-native New Zealand mud snails or high mercury levels, we work to find solutions to these issues, to ensure that Silver Creek remains a special place for people and nature.”

The Nature Conservancy is a leading international, nonprofit organization that preserves plants, animals and natural communities representing the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 15 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 102 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Visit us on the Web at nature.org.

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