



**5:30 PM EST**  
**Monday, May 22, 2023**

**Natural Fish Losses from Columnaris**

Dear Neighbors,

In our most recent Lake Alert that we sent on May 16, we shared a link to a document that discussed how fish losses can occur naturally in reservoirs. Last week we began observing a number of fish, primarily Bluegills (Bream), either deceased or in obvious signs of distress in Lake Blalock and Lake Bowen. Area fishermen also noticed and shared this information with us. As with all losses of fish in our reservoirs, our watershed team alerted the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) and South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC).

In an effort to determine the exact cause of the fish loss we took the initiative to send several specimens to the Alabama Fish Farming Center at Auburn University who completed diagnostic laboratory testing on the fish. We received the results back today that showed that the cause of this recent fish loss was due to infection of the fish by *Flavobacterium covae* bacteria, resulting in a type of fish disease called Columnaris – commonly referred to as Saddleback disease. Columnaris is naturally occurring, originating from a very common type of bacteria that often spreads quickly among fish during times of stress – particularly during the spawning season that just concluded. To learn more about Columnaris, please view an informative [Q & A document](#) we created.

I hope you find this information helpful, and appreciate your continued partnership as we work together to ensure our reservoirs are not only a great source of drinking water, but a healthy environment for fish and other aquatic life as well as recreational activities. Please continue to feel free to reach out.

**Most sincerely,**

**Guy Boyle**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Spartanburg Water**