



STATEWIDE MOSQUITO CONTROL PRACTICES

Background Information and Current Policy Issues

Mass Audubon has been concerned for many years about the effectiveness of mosquito control activities in protecting people from mosquito borne diseases and the impacts of mosquito control on wildlife and wildlife habitat. The Massachusetts Secretary of Environmental Affairs' 1998 requirements for development of Best Management Practices (BMPs) remain unaddressed while mosquito control activities continue and in some instances are increasing.

The impacts of mosquito control on humans, wildlife, and ecological health in Massachusetts are not known, because these effects have not been adequately studied. Mosquito control activities are taking place in many localities on a regular basis. There is a need to refocus the mosquito control program on public health rather than nuisance control, to institute BMPs, to improve and create consistent recordkeeping, and to systematically monitor nontarget impacts.

In 1998, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA)/ Department of Agricultural Resources/Pesticide Bureau's Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board (SRMCB; *MGL. Chapt. 252*) published a Final Generic Environmental Impact Report (GEIR). The EOEA Secretary's Certificate, issued under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) found that: "the GEIR falls short of the ambitious goal of providing the basis for all future mosquito control projects." The MEPA Certificate also acknowledged a need for additional study and research regarding efficacy and impacts of freshwater mosquito control techniques¹. The Certificate required that these issues be addressed by the Reclamation Board, with annual progress report updates to be filed with MEPA each year.

Since 1998, **NO UPDATES** have been made available for public review through the MEPA process. UMass Amherst is developing standards for water management practices in freshwater wetlands (e.g. ditch cleaning), but there has been no announcement of the schedule for completion or public review of these standards. There are no statewide standard operating procedures for mosquito control activities that would limit pesticide applications to those necessary for protection of public health.

Concerns regarding the existing outdated and inefficient mosquito control system include a lack of accountability on the actual efficacy and nontarget impacts of mosquito control activities, lack of standardized statewide BMPs, and organizational issues associated with an antiquated mosquito control legal structure. Mosquito control organizational structure should be more clearly linked to and focused on public health, and the state Department of Public Health (DPH) should have a strong role in mosquito control program management in coordination with regional mosquito districts, local officials, and other experts.

Mass Audubon supports the DPH's *Massachusetts Arbovirus Surveillance And Response Plan*. The DPH plan, if implemented fully statewide, can help protect the public from West Nile

¹ Best management practices for salt marsh mosquito control are available in the form of "Open Marsh Water Management" techniques, and these methods are being applied in many Massachusetts salt marshes.

Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE), without undue harm to the environment. However, the mosquito control districts operate under an independent legal framework and are not required to limit their pesticide applications to those recommended in the DPH guidelines. **Municipalities are faced with a dilemma: join a mosquito control district and risk paying for spraying or ditching activities they may not want or need; or stay out of the district and have no capacity to monitor for or respond to West Nile Virus or Eastern Equine Encephalitis.**

Mass Audubon has developed *Recommendations for Improvement of Mosquito Control in Massachusetts* for reform of mosquito control practices in Massachusetts. Significant changes are needed in the way mosquito control is managed and funded in Massachusetts. Some of these changes require legislation, which has been re-filed in 2007 on our behalf as *An Act providing for the Public Health by Managing Mosquitoes in the Commonwealth (S. 495.)* Additional funding is also needed. **The status quo is unacceptable, however, as mosquito control activities continue without the benefit of adequate understanding of the public health or environmental effects.**

We encourage citizens, organizations, and public officials to support reforms in the way mosquito control is managed in Massachusetts.

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