

Mosquito Control on Federal Lands

for federal properties where mosquito control is limited or not allowed

Issue: Federal agencies need to better accommodate mosquito control activities on their lands, as identified and performed by local mosquito control programs.

Background: Water on federal lands (e.g. National Wildlife Refuges, National Seashores) can produce severe mosquito infestations that can adversely affect quality-of-life, human health, and local economies in nearby communities. Regulations and policies for federal lands management vary greatly across federal agencies, or even within an agency. Mosquito monitoring and control operations are occasionally prohibited on a federal property – or, if permitted, can only be done in a less than optimal manner. This necessitates wide area insecticide treatments in populated areas where people live, work or recreate rather than focused applications at the source of the problem. Mosquito control districts (MCDs) and federal land managers must work together to control mosquitoes in a practicable, efficacious, cost effective, environmentally compatible manner.

Discussion: Several potentially lethal diseases such as West Nile virus, eastern and western equine encephalitis, dengue fever, and malaria are transmitted by mosquitoes, but even *without* any disease transmission large numbers of mosquito bites cause substantive human health problems and medical complications. Controlling mosquito population levels for species of concern is one of the best ways to prevent mosquito-borne diseases. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognizes this human health reality, as do most all local public health authorities.

The unique nature of federal lands necessitates a customized, site-by-site approach that requires compromise on both sides. To help promote mutual understanding with respect to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lands, in March, 2014 the American Mosquito Control Association completed a guidance document, “Helpful Information to Have or Consider for Mosquito Control on National Wildlife Refuges,” which we then disseminated throughout the Service. This document describes when mosquito control might be needed on many federal refuges and what to consider when making mosquito management decisions. We appreciate that the mosquito control measures proposed for any federal property must support the natural resources or management goals.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (F&WS) is now developing a Technical Handbook to serve as guidance for National Wildlife Refuge managers regarding mosquito control needs and practices on refuges. AMCA met with F&WS staff to discuss the need to consider public health protection from mosquitoes on the refuges, including protection from both disease carrying and pest mosquitoes. However, there may not be an opportunity to review the Handbook’s contents until after the Handbook is declared final.

Needed Action: Mosquito control agencies will continue to work through administrative channels to help develop mosquito management plans for federal lands. In the event that conflicts cannot be satisfactorily resolved via administrative interactions with federal agencies, mosquito control programs may call for Congressional assistance to help protect the public’s health and welfare.