



Mosquitoes ... The Latest Buzz

One summer, an APC member preparing to enjoy a peaceful moment on Accabonac in her kayak, was alarmed when a helicopter swooped low over the marsh, dropping some kind of pesticide on the creek where she was paddling. It sent her to the phone and the computer to investigate and learn what she could about what was being sprayed and why. Here is useful information that has been researched and compiled in response to her concerns. We feel it's important that people be accurately informed so they can take necessary precautions but not be alarmed.

While the Suffolk County Vector Control long-term plan for wetlands such as Accabonac Harbor calls for discontinuing the controversial ditching program, insecticide application continues as a method of controlling mosquito populations.

Important to note – West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis are not found on the East End at this time; in fact, there have been no cases in New York this year and very few cases in other parts of the country. Any current spraying by Vector Control is primarily for nuisance control.

The pesticides being used by VC are Methoprene (altisid) and Bti. Methoprene, though not believed to be toxic to mammals, may kill or stunt crustaceans, including lobsters. Bti can affect the larval state of a great variety of insects, including butterflies, bees, dragonflies and other non-targeted species.

Accabonac Harbor is sprayed by low-flying helicopters in the early morning or around sunset. Notice of scheduled Vector Control Applications, both ground and aerial, can be found on the Suffolk County Vector Control website, where you can also find the No-Spray Registry, the County's Wetland Management Long-Term Plan and a host of other useful resources: suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/PublicWorks/VectorControl/NoSprayLawRegistry.aspx. Far more extensive information is available online, but APC wanted to be sure our members know the basics about spraying in our environmentally fragile area.

Vector Control notifies East Hampton Town's Natural Resources Director of the areas to be sprayed and, if Accabonac is included, the director notifies APC; unfortunately, the decision to spray is often made on Monday for spraying on Tuesday. Notice of aerial spraying of Accabonac Harbor is also posted physically: Old Stone Highway just west of Louse Point Road is one location. Reportedly, in recent years Vector Control has only used Bti, and they have not used any adulticide for a long time, a welcome change that was repeatedly requested by the Natural Resources Department and APC.

What can you do?

There are steps we can all take to be informed and to do our best to protect Accabonac from any unknown potential damage that spraying may cause to the species that inhabit our precious wetlands and waters.

1. We should all **sign the No-Spray Registry**, which may protect us from some nuisance spraying or at least keep it at a distance from our own property. This registry applies to fogging from trucks, which very likely would be using some pyrethrin, much more dangerous to non-target species, to our waters and to us, than altosid or Bti. (Call 631-852-4272 and request a form.)
2. We should all **refrain from spraying** our own property, except with harmless things like garlic or other repellents. Spraying lawns for ticks has been considered "ineffectual" because the ticks are underground on mice part of their lives and thus miss being sprayed. Most ordinary pesticides used on lawns have been found to be carcinogenic. Organic pest control firms are listed in your phone directory.
3. We should all **be conscious of the Neighbor Notification Law** and demand that exterminators obey it. This is a state law that counties can opt into; both Nassau and Suffolk counties have done so. When a pesticide is deemed harmful, the firm using it is required by law to notify all immediate neighbors – in advance – to disclose what will be sprayed and when. If you know of a failure to notify, telephone 631-854-2519 and report it. There is also a rule that harmful pesticides must not be used within 25 feet of wetlands; any infractions should be reported to the DEC.
4. If you have plans to be out on the Creek, be sure to **call Vector Control** on Monday (631-852-4270) to ask, "Are there are plans to spray Accabonac Harbor this week?" (If enough of us call, it may even inspire VC to reconsider its program.)
5. **Practice prevention** – frequently patrol your property to eliminate any standing water!

