

# PESTICIDE SPRAYING REDUCED

## Suffolk: Targeted approach halves methoprene use

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By using GPS-plotted water samples to target helicopter spraying for mosquitoes, Suffolk County reduced the use of the pesticide methoprene by half at an East Hampton harbor this summer, county officials said Tuesday.

On Monday mornings this summer, volunteers and staff from towns and environmental groups collected water samples in Accabonac Harbor and counted larvae, officials said. The data was sent to Suffolk County Vector Control to map where larvae were found and direct spraying, if necessary.

Critics have called for the county to stop using methoprene, arguing that it harms not only insects but also larval crustaceans. Fishermen



Environmentalists have criticized the spraying of methoprene for mosquitoes around Accabonac Harbor.

have blamed methoprene for contributing to the decline in Long Island's lobster industry.

Suffolk County has argued it's one of the safest pesticides to control mosquitoes, which carry West Nile virus.

Suffolk County Legis. Bridget Fleming (D-Noyac) said the reduction in the amount sprayed and acreage represented a significant step forward that she'd look to replicate across the county.

"This is the first progress made in years of back-and-forth arguing about what the effects [of methoprene] might or might not be," she said in a phone interview. While 190 acres had been sprayed at Ac-

cabonac Harbor in the past, this year the county sprayed less than half that. The county skipped weekly spraying at the harbor four times this year, twice because it was too dry and twice because data didn't support spraying. Only the upper part of the marsh, away from the bay itself, was sprayed this year.

Kevin McAllister, former Peconic Baykeeper and founder of the Sag Harbor environmental group Defend H2O, which has pushed for a methoprene ban, said the county was still treating 15,000 acres with methoprene. He called the plan a "half-measure" and "distraction to tamp down opposition to methoprene spraying."

Kevin McDonald, policy director for The Nature Conservancy of Long Island, said the program represented a new approach to a divisive problem. "There are a whole bunch of people yelling 'don't spray methoprene.' A whole bunch of people yelling 'We have to.' . . . This is a bridge."

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