

## **Mosquito Control Task Force Meeting**

August 14, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. via Zoom

-Dan Sieger began at 1:03 p.m. by asking people on the call to introduce themselves- among those who did were: Kevin Cranston: Serving as Vice-Chair (DPH Commissioner Bharel's designee), MDAR Commissioner John Lebeaux: Introduced himself/duties. Alicia Bouchard. Also Caroline Higley: Director of Environmental Policy Coordination at EEA, David Lawson, Monica Driggers, Jennifer Pederson, David Brown, Julia Blatt, Russell Hopping, Brian Farless, Heidi Ricci from Mass Audubon, Alden Bourne from New England Public Radio, Everose Schuler Richard Day Director of Central Mass Mosquito Control, Senator Anne Gobi, Brad Mitchell, Tanya Colpitts, Jessica Grigg, Brian Rossman, Jo Comerford Senate Chair of Public Health, Barbara Chrenko, Priscilla Matton, Ellie Goldberg, Kelly Barber, Alexandra Zollo, Louise Bergeron, Martin Suuberg, Pine Dubois, Cliff Youse, Jennifer Forman Orth, Catherine Brown, and Susan Kane.

-Dan Sieger then introduced himself as Undersecretary for the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. Mr. Sieger stated the rest of the Task Force has not yet been appointed and thus there is no quorum, so this is not an official public meeting. Instead it's a meeting to review what the Task Force is and the legislation that created it. Mr. Sieger then handed over discussion to officials from MDAR.

-Commissioner Lebeaux introduced Jessica Burgess.

-Jessica Burgess introduced herself as counsel for MDAR and General Counsel for the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board or SRB. Ms. Burgess then presented an overview of the new legislation that was passed on July 20, 2020 by Governor Baker entitled "An Act to Mitigate Arbovirus in the Commonwealth." A copy of the legislation can be found at <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2020/Chapter120>.

-Dan Sieger thanked Jessica and followed up by stating that there are several moving pieces from the legislation. He stated that there is an extensive charge for this group and that he appreciates people serving. There will be a more extensive discussion on specifics at the next meeting. Mr. Sieger stated that they are working to get everyone formally appointed by next week. He then turned to MDAR to discuss the next agenda item.

-Commissioner Lebeaux thanked Mr. Sieger and stated that there was an aerial spray this past Monday evening under ideal weather conditions and that we are standing by for the surveillance and tracking information. The SRB is planning to meet shortly to designate its two members to this body.

-Dan Sieger then asked Vice-Chair Kevin Cranston for some additional background on EEE.

-Kevin Cranston mentioned that DPH does laboratory testing to characterize risk of EEE, and turned things over to Dr. Catherine Brown from DPH for more details on the Commonwealth's response to EEE.

-Dr. Brown stated that even though EEE is very rare, it is very serious. The incubation period in humans is 3-10 days after a bite. Onset of symptoms can be quite sudden and seizures, coma and death can come rapidly. There is a 30-50% mortality rate and a 50% rate in MA. Most people who survive have permanent neurological issues. One species of mosquito (*Culiseta melanura*) which primarily bites birds, is to blame for the EEE amplification cycle. At a certain point when enough birds have EEE, a second type of mosquito (*Coquillettidia perturbans*) will then bite the birds and because it also feeds on mammals that mosquito is at risk of spreading EEE to humans. Habitat that produces EEE activity is red maple/white cedar swamps, which is common in SE MA. In general there is a pattern in which outbreaks of EEE exist over a 2-3 year period. That doesn't mean cases don't exist at other times, but they are a lot less numerous. In 2019 MA had 12 cases and 6 deaths, the worst year since 1956. Bristol/Plymouth County has been the hotspot in MA for EEE. Much of the information here can be found in the DPH arbovirus response plan. The primary contribution that DPH makes to arbovirus surveillance and response is working with Mosquito Control Districts to monitor EEE activity, coordinating with the State Public Health Laboratory tests for trapped mosquitos for EEE, and then conducting a risk analysis to communicate the areas currently at risk for human disease. Trapping and testing for EEE is a very labor intensive process. Traps are left out, mosquitoes inside are collected and killed, and species are separated out to test the different types. They are grouped into groups of up to 50 where they are tested for West Nile Virus and EEE. In 2018 we had virtually no EEE activity but then in 2019 activity spiked. The purpose of a risk analysis is to allow a phased response; there are 5 different risk categories for EEE. Low risk is Green, Critical risk is red. The foundation of all prevention for mosquito borne disease in MA must be personal prevention. Everyone should use insect repellent while outdoors with EPA registered ingredients. In addition to repellents, reducing exposed skin helps as does avoiding outdoor activity between dusk and dawn in areas of increased risk. Stagnant water is a breeding site for WNV mosquitoes. We have had one human case in a critical risk community in July. We are assuming that we are in the second year of the EEE cycle.

-Dan Sieger then said that this concludes the day's agenda. Comments and questions should be held until we have a quorum next time at a public meeting. He appreciated everyone taking the time to join the Task Force and will formalizing appointments next week so we can have a meeting shortly thereafter.