

MCTF Local Engagement Subcommittee Meeting Minutes 11 04 21

Minutes for the Mosquito Control for the Twenty-First Century (MCTF) Task Force Meeting

Subcommittee Meeting: Local Engagement

November 4, 2021, 12:00 p.m. via Zoom

Meeting Topics:

- Meeting opening, roll call, welcome (chair)
- Housekeeping notes (EEA representatives)
- Meeting purpose and agenda (chair and facilitator)
- Identify relevant issues/overlap from other subcommittee and Task Force meetings (for later discussion)
- Review Directive ii and iii gaps and sources
- Presentation (Russ and Heidi) and discussion on landowner opt out
- Begin discussion of gaps and sources for Directive viii
- Action items and input on Meeting 4 agenda
- Wrap up (chair)
- Closing remarks and vote to adjourn (chair)

The subcommittee meeting was called to order by Chair Heidi Ricci at 12:04 p.m. and a quorum was established. Members in attendance included, Russell Hopping, Priscilla Matton, Derek Brindisi, and Eve Schluter. Jenny Helmick reviewed the agenda items with the group and noted the letter from Senator Comerford regarding the opt out process. Heidi Ricci informed the group she would only act as chair when she states she's acting as chair otherwise Jenny Helmick would run the meeting and Heidi Ricci would act as a participant.

There was discussion about DPH presentation and participation in meetings (Best Practices and Task Force). Alisha Bouchard stated that it is her understanding that EEA is coordinating with DPH to provide presentations and answer questions that were asked of DPH.

Flag relevant issues/overlap regarding development of recommendations that overlap with other Subcommittee and Task Force meetings

Overlapping issues that were identified included: education/outreach, and community needs.

Review Directives 2 and 3: Gaps and Sources

Municipal Opt Outs: When tackling gaps and sources, Jenny Helmick directed the subcommittee to identify the gap that a resource they are providing fills. In that context, a discussion about Senator Comerford's letter and comments from the Uxbridge Board of health ensued. Jenny Helmick noted that the subcommittee members should review the documents and if there was more information and dialogue needed then the subcommittee would revisit the idea of public participation and listening sessions. Priscilla Matton noted that whoever is speaking to Senator Comerford needed to communicate and make it clear that this subcommittee will not be making changes to the opt out process for next year. Priscilla Matton recommended that the letter should be shared with the full task force and not just the Local Engagement subcommittee. Derek acknowledged that communities that had problems with the opt out process have been identified and mentioned that this has been one of the objectives to try and provide recommendations for. Derek commented that getting information from these communities would help the subcommittee come up with strong recommendations to come back to the full committee. Russell Hopping noted that it would be helpful hear from a town that was approved for the opt out and a town that was not approved for the opt out to provide a balanced approach. Priscilla Matton noted that perhaps the subcommittee could get more information from DPH on the characteristics that determine if towns were approved or denied. Priscilla Matton also suggested the subcommittee speaking to a town that doesn't have

mosquito control and a town that does have mosquito control could be helpful in determining their options for mosquito control. Russell Hopping noted the need to focus on long term recommendations rather than the specific opt out for one more year.

Listening Session: Heidi asked if the listening sessions can be structured in a way that Legislators can speak and that transparency, input, and participation was important, not just for the committee, but for this process. Eve Schluter noted that the report did allow for public comments, and that these comments had been compiled. Eve Schluter mentioned that the subcommittee should be open to the idea of talking with people who are open to providing feedback.

The group discussed the need for additional input to supplement existing information. Jenny Helmick asked the subcommittee group if there was anything else for gaps and sources related to directive 2 and 3. There were no responses and comments from the subcommittee members

- Presentation from Russell Hopping and Heidi Ricci on Landowner opt out

Russell Hopping provided an overview of how the Trustees go through the opt out and exclusion process. He noted that the Trustees opt out about 500 parcels in 47 towns and the process to compile this information could take a few days. The Trustees provide GIS/GPS based mapping data for parcel information. Russell Hopping discussed another layer to their process related to the three organic farms on Trustees land. Russell Hopping noted that the opt out on-line does not give the Trustees an option to identify certified organic farms. Additionally, relative to the organic farms, they get a notification from MDAR every year that certification is still relevant and that they want to opt out. Each certified organic farm has their own person that oversees the process and MDAR initiates the confirmation with on an annual basis. Russell Hopping noted that he has appreciated the work of the MCDs; however, the burden for the Trustees is that the opt out is only for one year and that can be a challenge. Russell Hopping mentioned that perhaps having it for more than one year would be helpful. Also, Russell Hopping noted that the Trustees never know accurately what gets treated. Russell stated that they have yet to see a map of what gets treated and he would consider that a data gap for the Trustees at this time.

Jenny Helmick then turned the meeting over to Heidi Ricci. Heidi provided an overview of Mass Audubon's perspective and shared reasons why she believes people opt out.

- Concerns about human health and general desire to reduce chemical exposures. Concerns from individuals with underlying health concerns.
- Concerns about health impacts such as links to disease.
- Concerns about non-target impacts to insects and other beneficial organisms.
- Questions about efficacy of spraying compared to other methods.
- People are moving away from chemical lawn care and may have home gardens
- Who requests opt-outs: conservation organizations, federal lands, individual landowners? Increasing trend in number of landowners opting out.
- Mass Audubon's Drumlin farm – sales of 500k/year; uses organic methods but not certified.
- Working to do ecological restoration at many sites. For example, Tidmarsh restoration.
- Procedural aspects – improved but still burdensome. A volunteer spends a whole day every year submitting the same information every year. Signage requirements are a big concern for cost, unsightliness, signs blow down and become litter. Use of GIS instead of pie plates is on a case-by-case basis, we're not sure which districts are doing it, it's burdensome, and if pie plates aren't posted they're not protected legally if there were an incident.
- Concern about inability to opt out of aerial spraying even in cases like Drumlin and Tidmarsh.
- Work to do ecological restoration to see how much that can reduce mosquitoes – research seems to indicate healthy wetlands produce many fewer mosquitoes.

Eve Schluter noted that natural heritage review maps of where mosquito control might apply pesticides and they identify areas with rare species that should not be sprayed. Eve Schluter noted that both presenters highlighted procedural concerns with the opt out/exclusion process and that one recommendation could be for a user-friendly online system using mapping technologies. It is noted that some of the other things previously discussed fall more under Directive 8 ***Directive: (viii) providing for comprehensive annual evaluations of each season's mosquito control process, including the effectiveness of the process in controlling arbovirus and any effects of spraying on the environment, agriculture, and wildlife.***

Eve mentioned that the Subcommittee may be straying from the charge and wanted to harness what we're talking about into concrete recommendations; for example, promoting public participation, local options, and comprehensive annual evaluations.

Jessica Burgess noted that opt-out is statutory, exclusion is regulatory. Jessica Burgess commented that she can pull that together and provide it as foundation to structure recommendations.

Heidi asked Priscilla Matton if it would be possible to provide aerial maps of spraying and other various MCD data. Priscilla Matton responded that it would not be possible to provide a specific map of spraying due to the volume of the request but if a town/member municipality asked what was used in a particular area, the MCD could provide that. The group discussed the use of GPS data in determining areas that are treated for mosquitoes. Jessica Burgess confirmed spray information was public, but specific location of traps was not publicly disclosed as there have been examples of tampering. Russell Hopping commented that if the subcommittee wants to focus on local engagement, we need to have access to this data on where spraying occurs. Heidi added that there could be an interactive map and people could zoom to their area of interest.

Priscilla Matton also mentioned that MCD's can't predict where there will be an arbovirus issue each year. While the MCD's have some idea, random human cases can pop up for WNV or EEE which can change things. They use an IPM approach where data is used. Eve Schluter suggested that after a certain time perhaps data could be shared through MA GIS to help inform the towns regarding requests for opt outs. Heidi noted that not knowing about where testing is taking place and how decisions are made to do treatments in relation to disease risk makes it very difficult for local officials and residents to understand what is going on.

Heidi asked Priscilla how they address the label provisions on adulticide chemicals about avoiding spraying to fish bearing waters, blooming weeds, or crops when there has been no evidence of disease in that season. Priscilla Matton responded that based on the interpretation of the label, they are not making applications to water. For bees and blooming crops, the SRB came out with a directive back in 2007 or 2006 that bees are active between sunrise and sunset, so if we are applying after those time frames, they interpret that to be in compliance with the label. Heidi questioned the interpretation of the pesticide label since many wild species of bees are present on flowers at night, and felt that may be something for other subcommittees to address. There was discussion between members regarding spraying to water, mosquito habitat, and label interpretation. Jessica Burgess provided clarification to Heidi's questions regarding bees and pesticides and noted that this was something that EEA will need to circle back on as this topic overlaps with the Pesticide Selection and Best Practices subcommittees.

- Begin discussion of gaps and sources for Directive 8

Directive: (viii) providing for comprehensive annual evaluations of each season's mosquito control process, including the effectiveness of the process in controlling arbovirus and any effects of spraying on the environment, agriculture, and wildlife.

Heidi noted that there are gaps about efficacy and mentioned that there isn't a system in place to track both degree of effort and effectiveness. Eve Schluter commented that it's a challenge to design a study that can tease out what the variables may be to direct linkage to impacts. Department of Fish and Wildlife understands there are impacts they work to exclude areas with state listed species. Eve Schluter discussed that regulations are written, and the process is based on areas with records of these species. The group discussed that this may be an area of needed input, for example, future restoration efforts. Russell Hopping commented that the subcommittee

should start thinking about what, where, and when relative to a study and there may be value in considering a pilot program to determine how we get to these unknowns. The group discussed pilot projects and collaborating on existing community science projects to gather baseline data as a potential recommendation the subcommittee could make. Heidi added that the subcommittee may want to think about adding efficacy and aerial spraying to this program. Priscilla Matton noted that a pilot program should go outside of the MCDs and she recommended that a third party to do the pilot to provide a more objective approach. Priscilla Matton recommended a line item with funding for colleges or other third-party entities to do the study.

Abby asked if anyone would like to volunteer to start to draft a skeleton of threads related to documenting recommendations. There were no volunteers from the subcommittee, but ERG offered to come to the table with some straw proposals.

- Action items and input for next meeting
 - Discuss Directive 8
 - Next subcommittee meeting will be on 11/18
 - Senator Comerford and other supporting docs will be distributed prior to next meeting – ERG will circulate that information
 - Jessica Burgess to provide excerpt on Statute’s and Reg’s – ERG will circulate prior to next meeting
 - Public comments will be provided

Abby turned it over to Heidi Ricci to close out the meeting. Heidi addressed any public comments via the Q&A function in Zoom. The Zoom commenter asked to ensure that we are looking at and receiving all the public comments. Heidi thanked everyone for their time, effort, and listening to one another. Heidi took a motion to adjourn at 1:54 pm. The motion is seconded by Eve Schluter and Priscilla Matton. All members raise their hand to acknowledge and agree to the motion to adjourn the meeting.