

Hunterdon Freeholders Call On NJDEP To Fix ‘Miscommunication’ And Fund Black Fly Spraying Now

After being notified by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection on July 1st that the New Jersey side of the Delaware River will not be sprayed for black flies, due to New Jersey not providing funding, the Hunterdon County Freeholders have called on the NJDEP to fund the program that protects the health and quality of life for Hunterdon County residents.

The County received an email from the Pennsylvania DEP’s Southeast Regional Office, on July 1st, the day before spraying was to begin stating, ‘without financial support from New Jersey, Pennsylvania can no longer manage and spray the New Jersey portion of the Delaware River.’ There has been no notice from the NJDEP regarding the funding cut.

“The County’s Division of Mosquito and Vector Control reached out to the NJDEP and was advised that there has been a miscommunication that resulted in Pennsylvania not spraying the New Jersey side of the Delaware River. We are told it is being rectified and spraying will commence within the next two weeks,” Hunterdon County Freeholder Board Director Suzanne Lagay said.

“At the moment we will take the NJDEP at their word, however, we have reached out to our State Legislators asking that they investigate the matter. The Freeholder Board has also directed the County’s Health Department to closely monitor the situation,” Lagay added.

According to the Hunterdon County Health Department, “Black flies are not affected by repellents and are extremely painful biters that can cause severe allergic reactions. Livestock, pets, farms, wineries, golf courses, outdoor businesses, events, parks, hiking, gardening, in short, any outdoor commercial or private enterprise is subjected to the effects of these pests.”

New Jersey had participated in sharing the cost with Pennsylvania of the spraying program the last two years, as a result of heavy lobbying by Freeholders and Legislators from Hunterdon, Mercer and Warren Counties. The state’s share of the program was about \$200,000.

According to the Pennsylvania DEP, the material used for spraying is a naturally occurring bacteria (*Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis*) that kills the immature (larval) form of the black fly when they feed on it in the waterways. This application of B.t.i. is not toxic to fish or other aquatic macroinvertebrates found in the treated waterways. The spraying is conducted by helicopter.