

Senator Doherty Introduces Bill Directing NJDEP To Fund Black Fly Spraying

Senator Mike Doherty (R-Hunterdon, Warren, Somerset) introduced legislation in the State Senate, S-4182, on October 24th, that requires the Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to provide annual suppression of black flies each year along the Delaware River.

Hunterdon County Freeholder Board Director Suzanne Lagay stated, “Because black fly infestation is a multi-county problem and the suppression takes place along the state overseen Delaware River, it is a state responsibility. Senator Doherty’s legislation to reinstitute state funding for New Jersey’s share of the cost the Pennsylvania DEP’s spraying by helicopter is most welcome.”

In August, after the NJDEP notified the County that it would not fund its share of the program, after having done so for the past few years, the Hunterdon Freeholders provided the Pennsylvania DEP with funding to cover part of the cost for the final black fly suppression spraying along the Hunterdon side of the Delaware River.

S-4182 allows for the NJDEP to conduct the suppression in cooperation with another state and directs the Department to include sufficient funding for the suppression in its annual state budget request.

Senator Doherty said, upon introduction of the legislation, “Black flies are a terrible nuisance that plague the health and well-being of Hunterdon and Warren County residents, visitors, and small businesses alike.

The State must step up and pay to spray the New Jersey side of the Delaware River to suppress the gnat population. Fighting back against black flies will improve the quality of life for Hunterdon and Warren County residents, and boost shopping and dining tourism along the scenic Delaware.”

Hunterdon County’s Vector Control Division Head Tadhg Rainey has advised, “For black fly suppression to be most effective, it should take place on both sides of the Delaware River from Trenton to Columbia in Warren County inclusive, several times during the summer months.”

According to the PADEP, 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. The material does not affect other aquatic life negatively.

The PADEP indicates this application of B.t.i. is not toxic to fish or other aquatic macroinvertebrates found in the treated waterways.