

Questions from the Churchland Civic Meeting

Q: Is flooding the cells on an annual basis part of the Corps' mosquito control plan? Doesn't flooding defeat the purpose of drying out the cells? Is Maersk dredged material being pumped into the cells?

Operational measures to reduce mosquito breeding habitat, such as flooding the containment cells, is dependent on the activity of dredging projects. This year projects, such as the new Maersk terminal, Norfolk Harbor, and the Craney Island Rehandling Basin, has resulted in using the Craney Island Dredged Material Management Area (CIDMMA) to maximum capacity. Therefore, when dredging work is available, the Army can manage the cells by flooding them, which reduces the area for mosquitoes to breed. In most years, only one cell is being actively used, while the other two are being dewatered to allow for more dredged material in the future. Flooding the cells when dredging projects are not active would defeat the purpose of managing CIDMMA for future dredged material. During years when dredged material is not being actively pumped into a containment cell, other mosquito control measures will be necessary, including the aerial application of larvicides.

Q: How many times will they spray this year?

The US Air Force has scheduled four flights for the aerial application of pesticide over Craney Island. The Air Force spraying includes a large buffer zone south of Craney Island that includes portions of Churchland and the Hoffler Creek Wildlife Area. The Army contracts with Kritter Crop Dusting to spray Army property if necessary. Last year, adulticide spraying occurred five times.

Q: What should we expect this year as far as mosquito activity? Can you predict that? Will this season be similar to last year?

It is difficult to project the mosquito population in any given year. We are currently observing below average numbers of mosquitoes for this time of year. This year's rainfall is also below average and the water has stayed colder going into this spring season. These are all factors that must be addressed when analyzing the current mosquito population. However, the aggressive integrated pest management program that has been adopted by the Army and Navy this year should result in a reduced mosquito population on Federal property.

Q: If you have a lot of trees in your yard will the mosquitoes be worse? What is good for spraying our yards for adult mosquitoes? Can residents purchase mosquito fish for their yards?

There are four stages of the mosquito life cycle: egg, larvae, pupae, and adults. Mosquitoes in the larvae and pupae stages must have standing water to survive. When mosquitoes emerge from the water as adults, female mosquitoes seek a blood meal. Males only feed on nectar. Once females have a meal, they will find a sheltered place to

rest for several days until they are gravid, which means they are ready to lay eggs. Trees, shrubs, and tall grasses are great places for mosquitoes to rest because these places are humid, protect mosquitoes from drying out by the sun, and protect them from the wind. The most effective way to reduce mosquitoes in your yard is maintaining your lawn and bushes. Clean gutters and empty any containers full of water. There are mosquito control products at garden supply centers, such as Home Depot and Lowe's that are effective in controlling mosquitoes in your yards. "Mosquito Dunks" are inexpensive and are used in standing water, such as goldfish ponds to kill any mosquito larvae growing in these areas. Please contact Portsmouth's Public Works Department to inquire about the potential purchase of mosquito fish.

Q: Can we call to have backpack spraying done in our backyards?

The Army and Navy can only treat areas on Federal property. The City of Portsmouth sprays mosquito habitats in the neighborhoods, but do not have the resources to spray in resident's backyards.

Q: Where are traps located? Is the count data available for each area? Is there historical data of trap counts?

There are 30-40 trap locations in the City, but not all are used each week. On Army property, four adult traps will be used this year to identify the species of mosquitoes using Craney Island and their densities. Also, larval surveillance is ongoing to detect areas mosquitoes are breeding and allow for timely treatment. This information is available on our mosquito website.

Q: If any, what are the health risks associated with spraying over our properties?

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), there are no health risks to residents associated with spraying pesticides over the neighborhoods as long as the EPA labels are strictly followed. Less than one ounce of pesticide is sprayed per acre, which is a very small amount of liquid, and it rapidly decomposes in nature.

Q: Has the Crops considered any means such as other predators, birds and dragonflies, in place of spraying?

Mosquito fish (*Gambusia*) are stocked in flooded ditches and ponds on Craney Island. These fish are voracious predators that feed on mosquito larvae. Purple martins feed on adult mosquitoes, and the Army encourages these birds to nest on Craney Island by putting up purple martin houses. Hopefully these natural predators can help control the mosquito population, but there will remain the need for spraying to reduce the number of mosquitoes.

Q: With the cuts in Government spending, how will that affect spending on mosquito control now and in the future?

Craney Island is a very important aspect of Hampton Roads. Our local economy relies on the ships that come to Hampton Roads ports. Although Government spending has become very conservative due to national security issues, maintaining operations at Craney Island remains a top priority. We have forecasted out our budget needs for the next several years, including mosquito control operations. This project should not be impacted in the next several years by budget cuts.

Q: Who owns the property along the access road behind Rivermill Cir.? What is being done to control the overgrown area? The gate accessing Craney Island is left open at night, can you ensure that it is keep closed?

We own the property from the point where Hedgerow Lane takes a sharp left turn towards Craney Island. It is basically a finger of property, including the road, between residents and the Navy property. We have granted an easement to the City of Portsmouth for their access to the City landfill. We are currently examining possible ground maintenance activities along this access road. A new gate has been installed entering Army property, and will automatically shut when individuals leave the property. The gate will be operational once Virginia Power connects power to it.