

The Otter Creek & the World's Deadliest Insect

While we wisely practice Coronavirus precautions, we can all be thankful that we have not been hit with civilization's greatest plague --- the mosquito. Covid 19 has impacted and delayed the District's preparations for the season. The State of Vermont Agency of Agriculture has deemed that larva sampling is unessential work on April 14th following Governor Scott's current Stay Home, Stay Safe Executive Order. The District received permission to sample high priority area on April 30th. District employees will have to complete the Dept. of Health & Dept of Labor - COVID-19 info on line training and comply with the State of Vermont's executive department addendum 11 to executive order 01-20 [Work Smart & Stay Safe -- Restart VT: Phase II] Grant funds have been cut back to the \$70,000 starting July 1st with no additional funding forecasted.

Sampling will be prioritized throughout the District. Hot spots will depend on the Otter Creek's water level. Fortunately the dry spring and low snow pack has been a blessing in keeping the numbers down, but this could all change in future week's time. The Otter Creek is unusually low for this time of the year. This means the flood plains are receding and drying out.

The Otter Creek watershed impacts the BLSG mosquito district differently depending on the mountain snow melt and springtime water levels. Low snowpack and rainfall translate to minimal flooding and low mosquito populations. While, when a harsh winter is paired with a warm and early spring just the opposite can be true. The Otter Creek does a great job of draining large amounts of runoff. However, when there is an excess of water flowing through the watershed, the creek tends to expel that water into many channels, ditches, and fields, providing optimal mosquito habitat.

The Otter Creek is 92-miles long, the longest creek in Vermont. Its headwaters are found in the towns of Mount Tabor, Peru, and Dorset. It flows north into Lake Champlain, ending in the town of Ferrisburgh. The Otter Creek watershed includes Rutland and Addison counties. Springtime in Vermont usually coincides with large amounts of run-off and rainfall, both of which end up flowing into the Otter Creek. When the Creek rises above certain levels, tributaries fill with water eventually flooding fields and other low-lying lands.

BLSG monitors the height of Otter Creek throughout the mosquito season which includes Spring through Fall. When certain river gauges show that the water is at or above a specific height, the District knows that a mosquito hatch preminent. Flooded ditches and fields in the Otter Creek watershed provide ideal habitat for mosquito larvae. The water temperature is usually mild, there is plenty of food, and many flooded areas are agricultural land, i.e. that they remain relatively undisturbed until they dry out.

The District strives to keep mosquito populations down in the towns of Brandon, Leicester, Salisbury, Goshen, Pittsford and Proctor. These six towns are located along the Otter Creek Watershed, home to prime habitat for mosquitoes. Weather has a huge impact on the mosquito season in Vermont and can make the difference of treating an acre or two on foot, or treating 8,000 acres via helicopter.

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