

Aerial spraying of mosquitoes criticized as threat to area waters

By Cynthia H. Craft, Sacramento Bee

If it seems like aerial bombardments of mosquitoes are coming fast and furious this summer, rest assured it's not a product of the imagination.

Mosquito control district aircraft are taking to the skies earlier and more frequently this season than in any other year since the West Nile virus was detected in the Sacramento region in 1999.

The stepped-up aerial pesticide sprayings are an unintended consequence of a federal court ruling that forces ground pesticide use by mosquito control districts to fall under the permit requirements of the federal Clean Water Act.

Specifically, mosquito district officials say, meeting the Clean Water Act requirements for groundwater treatments means more paperwork and administrative duties for ground technicians treating larval pools. The new rules have caused technicians to reach an average of 50 fewer larval pools monthly than they would have before the regulations went into effect this year, according to district officials.

Since aerial spraying of adulticides doesn't face the same restrictions as ground treatments near water, the district has opted to go after adult mosquitoes with sprayings by air or truck-mounted sprayers.

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