
Crimes of Environmentalism

How U.S. laws were changed to be pro-mosquito—and against humans

by Marjorie Mazel Hecht

In the past few years, U.S. public health has been forced out of the picture by concern for the protection of wildlife, and one of the chief beneficiaries is the mosquito. Mosquito populations in the United States are thriving, and their future looks even better, with disease-bearing foreign species arriving by such means as used tires sent here for retreading from tropical countries.

Mosquitoes are not just a nuisance. They carry and transmit deadly diseases: St. Louis encephalitis, dengue, malaria, yellow fever—all of which are responsible for millions of deaths annually worldwide. Most alarming is the news from a research team at the University of Florida that mosquitoes carry the lethal AIDS virus. The researchers are now trying to determine whether the mosquitoes can actually transmit the virus that they carry.

Effective mosquito control as practiced in the United States for decades, consists primarily of draining the swamps and standing water where the insects breed, and secondarily of using chemical and biological control measures. Since the late 1960s, however, laws and regulations aimed at protecting wildlife and endangered species and preserving wetlands have superseded the traditional pest control measures with criteria that are no longer based on the promotion of public health and safety.

In 1969, the emphasis of U.S. national policy switched from protecting humans to protecting flora and fauna. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 declared that it was now national policy “to encourage a productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment.” This might sound a little bit like support for motherhood, but the environmentalist interpretation of such harmony favored the wildlife at the expense of man.

According to Section 102 of the act, “all agencies of the Federal Government shall . . . insure that presently unquantified environmental amenities and values may be given appropriate consideration in decision-making along with eco-

nomie and technical considerations. . . .”

After almost 20 years of elaborating these “unquantified environmental amenities,” especially during the green years of the Carter administration, the government regulatory agencies have brought the pest control programs to a crisis point. The consequences are hair-raising in terms of public health as well as agriculture.

For example, a land developer filling in a swampy area on his property at the request of the mosquito control agency was slapped with a cease and desist order by the state Fish and Game agency and then with criminal charges because he was disturbing wetlands and the state of California has a legislative mandate to “preserve and increase wetlands.” In other words, let the mosquitoes breed, but don’t upset the natural ecological balance.

Also in California, in order to protect the habitat of the longhorn elderberry beetle, an endangered species, farmers cannot take action to prevent the banks of the Sacramento River from encroaching on their orchards and farms. (This practice, called rip-rapping, places large rocks on the river banks to stop the erosion.)

land is lost and we produce less food—man must protect this endangered beetle at all cost.

And soon, the Environmental Protection Agency will begin its Endangered Species Labeling Project, which will prohibit the use of pesticides in and around the habitats of endangered species. Unbelievably enough, this means that if a mosquito control agency plans to apply a mosquito larvicide, according to the EPA draft regulations, “they will be legally required to call an Endangered Species Specialist in the Fish and Wildlife Service” to find out if they have permission to proceed.

No more mosquito control

“This whole series of regulations puts us out of business,” said Dr. Bill Hazeltine, an entomologist who is the Manager/

Environmentalist of the Butte County Mosquito Abatement District in northern California. "There is a denial of the basic principle of good mosquito control: prevent the breeding places of mosquitoes by good water management."

"Once you eliminate the breeding places, you don't have to worry about controlling them afterwards," he said. "There are some places where drainage should not take place, and in those places, you would use other measures, biological and chemical. But now our arsenal has been destroyed. When you take away water management and then you restrict the chemicals that can be used, all that's left is the biological controls. By itself, biological control will give us levels of mosquitoes that very often are not tolerable."

Dr. Hazeltine scored the regulations for the Army Corps of Engineers, which is responsible for issuing permits for the filling or draining of water and wetlands, as well as some of the provisions of the Clean Water Act. "All of these regulations are looking at preserving the health of the wetlands and wildlife, not the people. . . . Somebody has to speak up for the people," he said.

Disease vectors

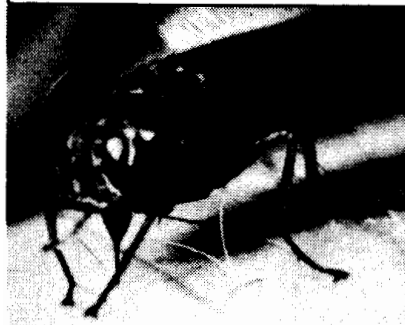
Mosquito-borne diseases are not restricted to the developing sector. In 1984, Dr. Hazeltine said, local mosquitoes (those produced in the urban area of Los Angeles) were responsible for 25 cases of St. Louis encephalitis in Long Beach, California. And a few years earlier, there was a similar epidemic in Dallas and Houston. At the time, he said, military aircraft were used to spray the whole area to control the disease-bearing mosquito. Today, the concept of "chemical trespassing" would "deny us the capacity to respond to a large-scale epidemic in the same way."

Malaria is another mosquito-borne disease that could become a problem. Dr. Hazeltine pointed out that California's mosquito abatement program began back in 1911-12 to stop a malaria epidemic in the flood area of the Sacramento delta that within three years had wiped out half of the native population.

One of the most serious dangers, Dr. Hazeltine said, is the mosquito *aedes albopictus*, which carries dengue. This mosquito is coming into the United States in used tires—millions of them—sent here from China, Formosa, and Japan for recapping. The tires, mostly truck tires, hold water on the inside where the pests breed, and right now there is no program to fumigate them. As a result, the dengue-carrying mosquito has spread through Texas and Louisiana, into Florida and Georgia, and up the Mississippi River as far as Ohio and Indiana.

"This mosquito poses a severe risk," Dr. Hazeltine said. "It is aggressive and a colonizer, and the only way to control it is to keep it out. Cuba had a dengue epidemic in 1985 that hospitalized 160,000 persons, with 185 deaths. . . . In China, it is the largest cause of infant deaths."

More Dangerous Than Nuclear War



If IMF policies continue, the deadly tse-tse fly

may be ruling the world by the 1990s!

That's what *EIR's* Special Report, "Economic Breakdown and the Threat of Global Pandemics," shows.

An exclusive presentation of the causal relation between economic policymaking and the outbreak of new deadly diseases.

- Features the world's only handbook for the general policymaker, on how pandemics are being generated and where they will next break out;
- Over 70 pages, including charts, maps, and graphs demonstrating the U.S. vulnerability to biological warfare;
- Prepared by the *EIR* scientific task force which 11 years ago forecast the precise location and time of the currently erupting epidemics in Africa.

Price: \$100

Order from:
EIR News Service
P.O. Box 17390
Washington, D.C. 20041-0390