A.8715 (Thiele)/S.6641 (LaValle)

Title: An Act to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to prohibiting the use of Methoprene.

Statement of Support: In 2007, four members of Suffolk's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) resigned after the Suffolk county Legislature ignored their recommendations and approved a mosquito control plan that relied upon the heavy use of methoprene and resmethrin. The plan had previously been rejected by CEQ. One of the four, Dr. John Potente, told the legislature then that "we did our research and homework" and found “damning evidence that the die-off of Long Island Sound lobsters was connected to methoprene and resmethrin.” In November 2013, Dr. Potente said, "In the name of mosquito control, the Suffolk County Department of Public Works [DPW] has a history of aggressively spraying chemicals that it has known little about."

Methoprene, which prevents larvae from maturing into adult mosquitoes, also harms other wetland creatures and marine life. The CEQ recommended that it be used only in health emergencies, like surges in mosquito-borne West Nile virus, but not to control nuisance mosquitoes. The CEQ also agreed that the mosquito-suppression plan failed to make a clear distinction between nuisance control and disease control. Suffolk County has one of the Northeast’s most aggressive mosquito-control programs and sprays methoprene widely over its 17,000 acres of wetlands routinely to kill adult mosquitoes.

There is considerable concern from the Long Island fishing industry that non-target crustaceans such as horseshoe crabs, blue crabs, spider crabs, Jonah crabs, lobster and grass shrimp may be adversely affected by methoprene as they share some of the same physiological traits as target insects. The National Pesticide Information Center reports that methoprene is moderately toxic to some fish, and highly toxic to others and may accumulate in fish tissues. While we must continue to combat insect-borne illnesses, we must also make sure that we are not doing more harm than good in addressing mosquito populations. Promising research suggests that alternatives to methoprene may exist that specifically target mosquitoes and black flies, but do little harm to non-target species.

S.6641 and A.8715 prohibits the use of any pesticide containing Methoprene in any storm drain, water course or fish habitat in any municipality adjoining the Long Island Sound and the Atlantic Ocean, and their connecting water bodies, bays, harbors, shallows and marshes. An exemption is provided, however, in an emergency where there is significant threat to public health and immediate mosquito control is required. Connecticut passed a ban on methoprene in 2011. New York should follow suit.

Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Urges Your Support Of A.8715/S.6641