

Conservation Committee Report

Volume 17 Issue 3

Jack Walters—Conservation Chairman

April—May 2015



DEP Study Reveals Lyme Disease Risk In All 67 Counties of Pennsylvania

For the first time, blacklegged (deer) ticks have now been observed in all 67 counties of Pennsylvania, according to researchers at The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The range expansion took place in just decades, as similar studies conducted in the mid-1960s found no specimens.

DEP's Vector Management Program, in collaboration with the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, published the findings on the risk of tick-borne disease in Pennsylvania in the Journal of Medical Entomology on April 14. The study was authored by the DEP Vector Management team of Mike Hutchinson, Maria Strohecker,

Andy Kyle, and Matt Helwig and Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Professor of Biology Dr. Tom Simmons.

The research found Ixodes scapularis, the blacklegged tick, and Borrelia burgdorferi,

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The Conservation Pledge

I give my pledge as an American to save and faithfully defend from waste, the natural resources of my country; the soil, the water, the air, the minerals, the plant life and the wildlife.

This is my Pledge!

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DCNR to resume spraying forests to combat gypsy moth damage

State woodland managers are preparing for an aerial spraying effort to combat gypsy moth population posed for spring outbreaks in the eastern portion of the state, DCNR officials said this week.

"Heavy infestations occurred in some areas last spring but our entomologists say most of that gypsy moth population collapsed, thanks to a naturally recurring fungus," said DCNR Acting Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn. "Last year, cold, wet

weather in the spring proved ideal for the fungus, deadly to gypsy moths, but we cannot always rely on the weather to be our ally.

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DEP Study Reveals Lyme Disease Risk In All 67 Counties of Pennsylvania (continued)

the causative agent of Lyme disease, present in all 67 counties of Pennsylvania. The research also found that in recent years the blacklegged tick has become imbedded in western Pennsylvania, though the prevalence rate of Lyme disease still remains relatively lower than the rest of the state. The blacklegged tick is the primary carrier of Lyme disease, an infectious disease caused by the bite of an infected tick that can cause fever, fatigue, headache, muscle aches, and joint pain.

“DEP’s Vector Management team’s confirmation of the high risk of Lyme disease in every county of the Commonwealth verifies that every Pennsylvanian, from Philadelphia to Erie, must take precautions to prevent the spread of Lyme disease,” said acting DEP Secretary John Quigley.

“The first line of defense against Lyme disease and any other tick-borne illnesses is avoiding tick infested areas. We know, however, that as the weather becomes nicer many residents spend more time outdoors. We suggest that people wear protective clothing, use insect repellent (i.e. DEET), and do a full body check after spending time outdoors,” said acting Physician General Dr. Rachel Levine.

The study also confirmed the presence of two other human pathogen diseases, Babesiosis and Anaplasmosis, in Pennsylvania blacklegged ticks. The prevalence rates of these two diseases were much lower than Lyme disease.

Pennsylvania has reported the most cases of Lyme disease in the nation for the past five years. All Pennsylvanians are encouraged to take precautions to prevent the spread of tick-borne illnesses.

“Parents should check their children for ticks. Showering within two hours of outdoor exposure may also help prevent transmission. If an individual has been bitten by a tick, we recommend that they remove the tick carefully with a set of fine tipped tweezers. If an individual develops signs and symptoms of Lyme disease after a tick bite, we urge them to seek medical attention. Early diagnosis and treatment of Lyme disease may prevent late-stage complications,” Dr. Levine said.

To view a Pennsylvania Department of Health fact sheet on Lyme disease, click [here](#).

To view the study published in the Journal of Medical Entomology, click [here](#).

Source: PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

DCNR to add 17,000 acres to Elk State Forest in the Pennsylvania Wilds



Acting DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn has announced that the department is adding more than 17,000 acres of wooded land and waterways to the adjacent Elk State Forest with the acquisition of about a 27-square mile property in Norwich and Sergeant townships near the town of Clermont in southern McKean County.

The state invested \$7.2 million to purchase the land, which came a fund from mitigation payments for rights-of-way and other transactions that is intended for the acquisition of new state forest lands. The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, a non-profit organization that focuses on enhancing the region's quality of life by protecting and restoring exceptional places, facilitated the purchase with additional funds from the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

"This property will be open to the public for hunting, fishing, hiking and other recreational activities, expanding the tremendous recreational opportunities that attract visitors to the Pennsylvania Wilds every year who support the local economy through tourism," Dunn said. "It will forever protect a number of high quality tributaries to the East Branch Clarion River and habitat for several species of concern, such as the timber rattlesnake."

This is the largest land addition to the state forest system in 65 years.

The property was purchased from Forest Investment Associates (FIA). The company will retain the timber rights for 35 years and continue harvesting timber—supporting local forest management companies and sawmills—under an agreement that requires sustainable forest management practices.

The timber rights will revert to DCNR in the future, which will continue to ensure it is well-managed for the health of the forest and to support jobs that pay in the forest products industry.

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DCNR to add 17,000 acres to Elk State Forest in the Pennsylvania Wilds (continued)

“This property is magnificent, and is the largest acquisition in the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy’s history. We are excited to add it to the state forest system,” said WPC President and CEO Tom Saunders. “It has extensive forest and rich conservation values, and builds on the Conservancy’s legacy of protecting the region’s most important places. We also are so pleased that this brings the Conservancy’s land protection work to a quarter million acres.”

DCNR will now evaluate the property for additional opportunities for public access, trails and other forest recreation amenities.

The commonwealth compensates local governments on an annual basis as payment-in-lieu of taxes for public lands. This is meant to replace taxes that would have been generated if these land holdings were in private ownership. Conservation of these lands also will ensure that municipalities will not have to bear costs associated with development.

Pennsylvania has 2.2 million acres of state forest land managed for multiple purposes including protecting habitat for wildlife and native plants, and providing an array of public recreational opportunities such as hiking, hunting and wildlife watching. The well-managed state forests also provide a steady, continuous supply of quality timber to the market, supporting thousands of jobs in Pennsylvania’s wood products industries.



Elk State Forest derives its name from the great numbers of elk that once thrived in the area. Located mainly in Elk and Cameron counties, it now comprises more than 200,000 acres of northern hardwood forest. Today, visitors can once again see elk in the meadows and openings scattered throughout the state forest.

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DCNR to add 17,000 acres to Elk State Forest in the Pennsylvania Wilds (continued)

The forest features the Elk Country Visitor Center and a portion of the Elk Scenic Drive.

The first purchase of land for the Elk State Forest was a 3,487-acre tract in Middle Jerry Run bought from D.R. Fullerton on May 31, 1900. Originally called Forest Reservations, these lands were purchased to re-establish a forest that had been nearly eliminated by cutting and burning.

The Pennsylvania Wilds is a 12-½ county conservation landscape helping to revitalize rural communities through sustainable tourism development and inspire a stewardship ethic in residents and visitors.

For information, visit the Pennsylvania Wilds or Elk State Forest web pages.

Source: PA DCNR

DCNR to resume spraying forests to combat gypsy moth damage (continued)

“A continuing year-to-year gypsy moth spraying program is often necessary to suppress rebounding insect populations while protecting forest stands that may have been damaged the previous spring,” Dunn said.

A 26,433-acre suppression program in 38 treatment blocks is proposed for 2015 in six northeastern counties—Carbon, Columbia, Luzerne, Northumberland, Pike and Schuylkill—principally on state-managed parks, forests, and game lands, but also some private residential lands in Carbon County.

Though weather dependent, spraying is expected to begin in early to mid-May and be completed by the end of May or early June. Helicopters will be used in the spraying program.

Surveys across the state indicate gypsy moth populations are increasing and have the potential to cause defoliation this spring, especially in eastern Pennsylvania.

In 2014, gypsy moth populations increased in eastern Pennsylvania after several years of high populations in the northwestern part of the state. DCNR treated 1,901 acres in 42 spray blocks in May in four northwestern counties. Treated areas all were on private lands.

Bureau of Forestry experts note the state’s oak stands are especially vulnerable to gypsy moth infestation and mortality. The loss of habitat, timber and tree growth are considerable when gypsy moth populations are allowed to go untreated.

Gypsy moth defoliation in 2014 totaled 214,972 acres, and another 115,104 acres were defoliated by the fall cankerworm, a native forest insect defoliator. Aerial and ground surveys indicated a total of 431,956 acres of damage by forest pests in 2014.

Before spring 2013, DCNR last sprayed for gypsy moths in 2009, when more than 178,380 acres in 25 counties were targeted across the state. In 2008 a total of 221,221 acres of private, state and federal woodlands were sprayed in 27 counties.

“Private woodland owners and state forest visitors must remember spraying is a suppression effort and a forest management effort to protect trees from moderate to severe defoliation,” said Dr. Donald Eggen, the bureau’s forest health manager. “The gypsy moth will continue its cyclic population with ups and downs, and we cannot eradicate the insect. It’s too well-established and is here to stay.”

Forestry bureau experts identify the gypsy moth as one of the most destructive forest pests in Pennsylvania. Feeding while in the larval—or caterpillar—stage, the insect usually hatches and begins feeding from mid- to late April in southern Pennsylvania, and in early to mid-May in the northern part of the state.

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DCNR to resume spraying forests to combat gypsy moth damage (continued)

Oak, apple, sweet gum, basswood, birch, aspen, and willow trees are affected the most by the gypsy moth. Older larvae also will feed on hemlock, pines, spruces, northern white cedar, and other conifers. A tree begins to significantly suffer when 30 percent or more of its leaf surface is lost.

Begun in 1972, forest insect spray programs are a cooperative effort among DCNR's Bureau of Forestry, county governments and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service's Forest Health Protection Unit.

The gypsy moth was introduced to North America in 1869 at Medford, Mass., where it was used in a silk-production experiment. The gypsy moth first reached Pennsylvania in Luzerne County in 1932, and since then has infested every county.

For more information on forest pests, visit [here](#).

Source: PA DCNR

DEP Awards \$2.05 Million in West Nile Virus Grants to 25 Counties

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today awarded \$2.05 million in West Nile Virus Control grants to 25 counties.

West Nile Virus (WNV) is most commonly transmitted to humans through the bites of infected mosquitoes. DEP annually partners with counties to cover the costs associated with surveying and controlling mosquitoes that can carry WNV. DEP and county programs use a combination of education, surveillance, source reduction, and environmentally responsible insecticides to reduce the risk of WNV.

“DEP is committed to preventing the spread of West Nile Virus,” said DEP Secretary John Quigley. “We are proud to partner with local governments each year in order to protect the public from this health risk.”

The grants, funded by the General Fund, were developed in consultation with county officials and are largely based on the historic risk of WNV.

Most people infected with WNV will never exhibit any symptoms, but one in five may develop a fever with symptoms such as fatigue and body aches. While there is currently no vaccine for WNV, most people completely recover from the fever. Less than 1% of people infected with WNV will develop a serious neurological illness, such as encephalitis.

DEP encourages Pennsylvanians to remove standing water from their property and use insect repellents outdoors to prepare for mosquito season and prevent infection.

In the summer of 2014, DEP detected 1,240 mosquito samples, 17 avian specimens, one horse, and 17 humans infected with WNV, including a Philadelphia man in his 80s who succumbed to the neurological form of the virus.

Birds can be carriers of WNV, and DEP tests dead birds for WNV to determine the virus' presence in the environment. To report a dead bird, file a mosquito complaint, or for more information about WNV, visit www.westnile.state.pa.us or call 717-346-8243

717-346-8243.

Editor's Note: Below is the list of the 2015 West Nile Virus control grant amounts for each county:

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DEP Awards \$2.05 Million in West Nile Virus Grants to 25 Counties (continued)

Adams: \$82,840
Allegheny: \$171,400
Beaver: \$34,820
Berks: \$53,200
Blair: \$28,240
Bucks: \$144,900
Cambria: \$62,460
Centre: \$68,640
Chester: \$102,240
Cumberland: \$59,720
Dauphin: \$87,100
Delaware: \$113,560
Erie: \$35,500
Fayette: \$34,820
Franklin: \$59,300
Lackawanna: \$36,120
Lancaster: \$65,020
Lawrence: \$43,380
Lebanon: \$56,380
Lehigh: \$98,880
Luzerne: \$80,260
Monroe: \$30,000
Montgomery: \$145,820
Philadelphia: \$244,340
York: \$113,160

Source: The PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

DEP Begins Helicopter Spraying to Control Black Flies

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has begun aerial spraying on more than 1,600 stream miles in 36 Pennsylvania counties to control black flies, also referred to as gnats.

The first aerial spraying took place on April 27 along the Schuylkill River. Other waterways will be treated as stream flows and weather conditions allow.

“Black flies are a nuisance, especially when Pennsylvanians are trying to enjoy the outdoors and our many streams and rivers,” Acting DEP Secretary John Quigley said. “This annual initiative reduces the nuisance so that all of us can get out there and enjoy Pennsylvania’s waterways.”

This year, 49 rivers and streams spanning more than 1,600 miles will be monitored and treated as needed. Spraying activities will be performed both by helicopter and ground crews. The frequency will depend upon weather and biological conditions. Treatments cannot occur during periods of heavy rain or when water levels are high as high water conditions lower the effectiveness of the treatment.

DEP uses Bti, a naturally occurring bacterium, to treat the larval stage of four specific human pest black fly species. This bacterium degrades quickly in the environment and does not harm the aquatic ecosystem, birds, or other insects.

DEP notifies county and local emergency management officials prior to any spraying activity. Helicopters seen flying over waterways and ground crews using backpack sprayers off bridges are conducting control operations on behalf of DEP’s black fly program. Anyone concerned at the sight of a helicopter or ground personnel is encouraged to call their county emergency management office to verify that a black fly treatment is taking place in their area on that day.

For more information on Pennsylvania's Black Fly Suppression Program, click [here](#) or visit www.dep.state.pa.us, keyword Black Fly.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Below is a list of the waterways to be sprayed for black flies, by county:

Armstrong

Allegheny River
Kiskiminetas River
Mahoning Creek
Redbank Creek

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DEP Begins Helicopter Spraying to Control Black Flies (continued)

Beaver

Connoquenessing Creek

Berks

Manatawny Creek

Schuylkill River

Tulpehocken Creek

Bradford

Chemung River

North Branch Susquehanna River

Bucks

Delaware River

Tohickon Creek

Butler

Slippery Rock Creek

Chester

Brandywine Creek

Octoraro Creek

Schuylkill River

French Creek

Clarion

Allegheny River

Clarion River

Redbank Creek

Clearfield

Chest Creek

West Branch Susquehanna River

Columbia

Fishing Creek

North Branch Susquehanna River

Cumberland

Conodoguinet Creek

Susquehanna River

Yellow Breeches Creek

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DEP Begins Helicopter Spraying to Control Black Flies (continued)

Dauphin

Juniata River
Mahantango Creek
Susquehanna River
Swatara Creek

Elk

Clarion River

Fayette

Youghiogheny River

Forest

Allegheny River
Clarion River
Tionesta Creek

Huntingdon

Aughwick Creek
Frankstown Branch Juniata River
Juniata River

Indiana

Conemaugh River
Kiskiminetas River

Juniata

Juniata River
Susquehanna River
Tuscarora Creek

Lawrence

Connoquenessing Creek
Neshannock Creek
Slippery Rock Creek

Lehigh

Lehigh River

Luzerne

North Branch Susquehanna River

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DEP Begins Helicopter Spraying to Control Black Flies (continued)

Lycoming

Loyalsock Creek
Pine Creek
West Branch Susquehanna River

Mifflin

Juniata River

Montgomery

Manatawny Creek
Perkiomen Creek

Northampton

Delaware River
Lehigh River

Perry

Juniata River
Sherman Creek
Susquehanna River

Schuylkill

Schuylkill River

Snyder

Middle Creek
Penns Creek
Susquehanna River

Union

Penns Creek
West Branch Susquehanna River

Venango

Allegheny River
French Creek
Oil Creek
Sandy Creek
Sugar Creek

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DEP Begins Helicopter Spraying to Control Black Flies (continued)

Warren

Allegheny River
Brokenstraw Creek
Conewango Creek

Westmoreland

Conemaugh River
Kiskiminetas River
Loyalhanna Creek
Youghiogheny River

Wyoming

North Branch Susquehanna River
Tunkhannock Creek

York

Conewago Creek
Susquehanna River
Yellow Breeches Creek

Source: The PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)