

## **ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS CONTINUES TO IGNORE STATE HEALTH OFFICIALS SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS TO LIMIT THE SPREAD OF WEST NILE VIRUS**

The State of Michigan has been put on heightened alert by State Health nOfficials and the University of Michigan Diagnostic Laboratory because of the West Nile Virus and the St. Louis Encephalitis Mosquitoes.

Michigan Mosquito Control Associations are telling property owners they can limit the spread of these mosquitoes by removing or dumping containers that trap water that can become stagnant. The mosquito-borne virus can cause potentially fatal influenza like symptoms in people. The virus attacks the central nervous system and can weaken the immune system and muscles. Once it is in the blood stream it can multiply and inflame the brain tissue causing meningitis or encephalitis. People can die!

The Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) have sent threatening letters to shoreline property owners telling us we can no longer maintain our beaches. We cannot rake the beach, we cannot pull weeds, we cannot fill in holes containing stagnant water. If we do any of this we can be fined and/or jailed. Consequently, our beaches are becoming mosquito-breeding farms.

Evidently these agencies think Mosquitoes are important wildlife and need protection with great risk to humans. Where's the balance.

Our beaches are now being classified as wetlands - this is supposedly for the betterment of the water quality. That is a few weeds here and there are charged with the responsibility to clean the Great Lakes.

Senator Ken Sikkema stated in September 2001 that Fifty-Four Billion Gallons of improperly treated sewage have gone into Michigan waters in the last year and a half, much of that reaching the Great Lakes. He said we've had beach closings all over Michigan. That's an example of an issue that is impacting our water quality. How can a few weeds on existing beaches, that have been maintained for decades, clean 54 Billion gallons of sewage?

The Michigan DEQ issues permits for direct discharge into waterways by municipal Wastewater Treatment Plants. It appears from the facts that the ACOE/DEQ are doing a horrible job of improving water quality and want to demonstrate they are going to improve the water by letters of intimidation, and even bring court action against a beach owner. This will not stop the beach closing in Michigan. They need to focus on the real problem.

But, Heaven forbid if a shoreline property owner wants to clean his property of muck and sludge and try to lessen the stench it creates.

You would think the Army Corps of Engineers and the Michigan DEQ would have more important issues to resolve and better ways to spend the taxpayer's money than harassing shoreline property owners who just want to clean their beaches! You would think that they would devote their time, energy, skills and appropriated funds to preventing harm to humans by mosquitoes, improve tourism and maintain the tax base to support schools, roads, healthcare and other important programs. I think if the policies of the ACOE's do not change you will find bus loads of shoreline property owners in Lansing petitioning to have their property taxes reduced in half. I also believe that shoreline property owners are prepared to bring a class action suit that could cost the government well over \$100 million dollars.

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