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Position Statement on Aerial Spraying of Pesticides in Response to EEE September 30, 2019

Michigan Audubon is opposed to the aerial application of pesticides in response to EEE in the state of Michigan because of the damaging effects this pesticide has on the ecosystem, including native bees and pollinators, migratory and resident birds, wildlife, and humans.

As Michigan's oldest conservation organization, Michigan Audubon will not stand by a hasty decision made by the state in response to a small number of EEE cases. Through historical evidence, we know enough about the risks and damage of pesticides to avoid drastic measures that will undoubtedly compromise environmental health.

According to the product label for MERUS 3.0, what the State is prepared to spray on several thousands of acres in the lower peninsula of Michigan is a pesticide:

"toxic to aquatic organisms, including fish and aquatic invertebrates. Runoff from treated areas or deposition of spray droplets into a body of water may be hazardous to fish and aquatic invertebrates [. . .] Do not apply over bodies of water (lakes, rivers, permanent streams, natural ponds, commercial fish ponds, swamps, marshes or estuaries), except when necessary to target areas where adult mosquitoes are present, and weather conditions will facilitate movement of applied material away from the water in order to minimize incidental deposition into the water body.

This product is highly toxic to bees exposed to direct treatment on blooming crops or weeds. Do not apply this product or allow it to drift to blooming crops or weeds while bees are foraging the treatment area, except when applications are made to prevent or control a threat to public and/or animal health determined by a state, tribal or local health or vector control agency on the basis of documented evidence of disease-causing agents in vector mosquitoes, or the occurrence of mosquito-borne disease in animal or human populations, or if specifically approved by the State."

We anticipate "mosquito season" in Michigan will end with a frost in the next few weeks and the decision to move forward with this pesticide spraying will result in introducing a highly toxic chemical to the ecosystem, resulting in runoff. This aerial spraying will kill honey bees as well as butterflies and other beneficial, crucial insects in our ecosystem.

With migration upon us, the timing of this spraying would negatively affect monarch butterflies and countless birds that are currently making their way to wintering grounds.

The damaging effects this pesticide has on the ecosystem are tremendous, putting already-vulnerable populations of native bees, birds, and pollinators at great risk. Already, the spraying of pesticides in the state has resulted in a massive number of bee and monarch butterfly deaths.

As an organization invested in the conservation of our natural resources, we encourage our constituents to make your voices heard by opting-out of aerial spraying and appealing legislators to make decisions based on sound scientific principles that reinforce our ecosystem overall, and support the best interest of all wildlife and current and future Michigan residents.