GREAT RIVERS ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER
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GREAT RIVERS ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER URGES CAUTION IN USE OF SPRAYING FOR WEST NILE VIRUS

St. Louis, Mo - Scientists disagree on the effectiveness of spraying of pesticides to prevent the spread of West Nile Virus. They agree however that spraying is the least effective method in combating West Nile. Some argue that it is completely ineffective since it takes very precise conditions (temperature, time, wind, droplet size) for the spray to actually kill mosquitoes. In fact, spraying may aggravate the problem for two reasons: first, the spraying kills off the natural predators of mosquitoes, and second it generates resistance to the pesticide.

St. Louis city and county officials are once again responding to concerns about West Nile Virus by spraying pesticides aimed at adult mosquito populations. Currently, St. Louis City and St. Louis County spray pesticides that are known to cause skin irritation, eye irritation, and asthmatic symptoms. Larger doses may affect the nervous system, causing loss of coordination or tremors. Very large doses can result in dizziness, headache, nausea, muscle twitching, reduced energy, changes in awareness, convulsions and loss of consciousness. Children, asthmatics, pregnant women, and pets are most susceptible to the pesticides.

It is the position of Great Rivers Environmental Law Center that St. Louis County and the City of St. Louis should establish a panel of citizens and experts to review the most recent data on the adverse health effects on humans and animals and also take into account more effective methods of pest control such as targeting mosquito larvae instead of adults and educating the public on the elimination of breeding sites, i.e. standing water. If government officials decide

that spraying must occur, they should notify residents as early as possible prior to spraying, notify schools and daycare centers of when spraying is about to be done, establish a source for medical information about pesticide hazards such as a website or hotline, give homeowners or entire neighborhoods a chance to opt out of having their property sprayed, and ensure residents are aware of this option. Since the goal of spraying is to protect public health, it is incumbent on government agencies to act in a responsible manner that minimizes adverse health effects.

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