

December 1, 2017

Dear Supporters of Don't Spray Me!

There are over 250 of you now, helping our joint effort in many ways: being block captains, putting out signs, offering technical advice, meeting with municipal committees, giving overall guidance as members of our executive board, and much more. As in 2016, DSM block captains did a great job of handing out information and watching for standing water. Thank you all!

Our year of activities will end with co-sponsoring the West Chester University Environmental Sustainability Film Series, film #4: "The Wisdom to Survive" on Thurs. Dec 7, at 7 p.m., but please come earlier to enjoy refreshments, mingle with like-minded people, and bring kids to see Santa Claus. Details at <https://dontsprayme.com/>.

Our organization was founded in 2015 by Graham Hudgings, his family and friends in West Chester Borough in order to combat the threat of poisoning of people and the environment by pesticides and other chemicals—all too often sprayed on us by local and state governments! Graham left this life in May 2017, after years of suffering and the inability to recover. In his memory, we are expanding our efforts to protect people and the environment from toxins, so that others are not poisoned in the future

Particular thanks to Sheila Burke and Michele Hensey, who brought us our new mission statement:

Don't Spray Me! is a citizens' organization committed to protecting the health and environment of our local communities by working to reduce the use of harmful chemicals, including synthetic pesticides. We collaborate with local governments and relevant agencies, educate citizens about natural methods of controlling mosquito populations, and promote the use of safe, effective alternatives to harmful chemicals. Founded in 2015 by residents of West Chester, PA and surrounding communities, we engage with all who share our concerns.

### **Don't Spray Me! Report for 2017**

Please note: this report does not purport to represent the West Chester's West Nile Task Force or the Chester County Health Department. We are, however, grateful for their support of efforts to reduce mosquito population by non-pesticidal means, and particularly to Borough Sustainability Coordinator Meghan Fogarty, Director of Public Works O'B Laing, to 2017 West Chester mayors Carolyn Comitta and Jordan Norley, and to Chester County Health Department Director Jeanne Casner for implementing the beneficial procedures described below.

## **Spraying, larviciding, and storm drains**

Chester County had only 4 known human WNV cases, and PA had 19 cases. As far as we can find out, there were no deaths in the state (compared to the mounting public health crisis of 2,000+ opioid-related deaths a year in our state).

West Chester Borough got through another summer with no Chester County Health Department spraying, but East Bradford, Downingtown, Birmingham, Thornbury, and Spring City were not so fortunate. It was a difficult summer with heat and lots of rain and in some areas residents reported more mosquitoes than in 2016.

In 2016, the Borough larvicided 30+ drains and by early July 2017 repaired most of those to prevent water from standing there. Those at the west end of College Ave. were not repaired due to extraneous reasons but were larvicided in July, and 3 drains were subsequently discovered not to be draining properly and were larvicided, in addition to some catch basins near Greenfield Park and the long-disused pool at the Melton Center. Those should all be repaired in 2018.

In other municipalities, we have not heard of about any past or planned storm drain repair or any larviciding in specific locations (other than at Frick's Locks in Phoenixville); please let us know of any that has come to your attention!

## **East Bradford report**

In February 2017, 15 East Bradford residents met at Bret Binder's home to discuss forming a chapter of DSM for EB township. Jeff Cantwell, Kurt Jaworski, Deb Liczwek, Bret Binder and Darryl Biery have taken leadership roles in the new organization this year.

Representatives from the group visited the Environmental Advisory Council three times during the year. It had resolved to develop a network of DSM members in all of the housing associations in the township. Deb Liczwek wrote a handout for that purpose. The EAC in September asked the Board of Supervisors to approve plans to (quoted from their minutes):

- 1) "allow the EBT DSM group to share the two newsletter 'Integrated Pest Management' (IPM) articles developed by the EAC with Township HOAs to encourage Township residents to follow recommended CCHD and CDC guidelines to reduce mosquito populations and minimize the use of pesticides."
- 2) "approve the EBT EAC efforts in early spring 2018 to prepare educational sessions for Township residents about IPM methods to reduce mosquitos and ticks and minimize pesticide use. The EAC requests a budget of \$500 for this effort."

Residents were able to question Jeanne Casner and one of her staff about their decision to spray part of East Bradford in early September.

Bret Binder, speaking for the group, requested that in the future spraying in EB be considered only if the Vector Index reaches a level of 800 (the level which the HD has agreed to for West Chester). Jeanne Casner objected, citing differences between urban and rural areas and recommending that an education program be in place in the township first. The request was tabled pending more information.

DSM's East Bradford mailing list of interested citizens now numbers 45 and they hope to be taking further organizational steps before the 2018 season.

Highlight: Three East Bradford residents objected to being sprayed with pesticides by the HD and were granted a buffer zone for reasons of chemical sensitivity, beehives and ornamental fish.

### **Other accomplishments and victories in 2017**

In April we organized a March for the Environment with 250 people hearing speakers at the Court House corner, then many of them marching to Quaker Hill with an environmental message. The event received favorable treatment from the Daily Local News.

Over the summer the Sierra Club Youth Corps conducted an experiment showing that a solution of vinegar with other household materials is effective in keeping weeds in brick sidewalks... and therefore that chemical poisons are unnecessary. We also succeeded in ending the use of Round Up by the Borough government (including at West Chester Public Library).

Many of you attended one or both of our celebratory community picnics in Everhart Park in May and in September. These picnics have developed into an alliance of DSM, Sierra Club, and the West Chester Food Co-op. protecting people and environment.

Those same groups, together with West Chester University and the environmental group 4CP, put on an environmental film series in the fall, with emphasis on the man-made chemicals that threaten us. See [dontsprayme.com](http://dontsprayme.com) and [facebook.com/dontsprayme](https://www.facebook.com/dontsprayme) for details.

DSM now has chapters in East Bradford, Westtown, and West Goshen.

In West Chester, the West Nile Task Force reached agreement on many aspects of a Response Plan, including the use of a 800 vector index as prelude to spraying, but has not agreed on wording about Borough officials' role in a decision to spray.

The County Health Department has been giving 48-hour warning of spraying (previously 24 hours) and has instituted or clarified a policy giving greater protection from spraying to hypersensitive individuals, beehives, and ornamental fish ponds.

## **Goals for 2018**

We will continue to work with the Borough and County on community education.

We applaud Public Works for their efforts; in our view, they need to have a budget and people power, such as summer interns, to conduct larviciding, the most effective form of mosquito control. We expect the Borough to make all suspect locations inhospitable to mosquito growth from April to October.

Besides in storm drains, unless the science shows otherwise, we would like to see larviciding in streams where surface water becomes stagnant in times of low flow, notably in Goose Creek in the southeast part of the Borough and in Plum Run near the sewage facility. Those were two areas had the highest incidence of mosquitoes in 2017.

DSM plans to start up chapters in Downingtown, Kennett Square, and Phoenixville.

We need to understand and clarify the size and procedures for implementing the buffer zone (mentioned above) for hypersensitives, beehives, and fishponds as well as the County's use of the Vector Index, which does not always seem correlated to spraying activity. We also need to find out how high mosquitoes will fly to lay eggs and how far into drain pipes. We can hope to find helpful resources at West Chester University.

We want to consider the question: do property owners have the right to spray poison that will cross property lines or affect public areas like sidewalks? In one example this year of voluntary action, a chemically sensitive person was notified that a neighbor was planning spraying by Mosquito Doctor. Neighbors reached out and suggested alternatives and the family deserves credit for choosing to spray a garlic solution instead of a permethrin-based pesticide.

In 2018 DSM will be instituting an "Adopt a Storm Drain" program, modeled on one in San Francisco. The "parent" of the storm drain would monitor its freedom from debris, note any mosquito activity or failure to drain properly, and report any problems to DSM, which would alert the appropriate office in the relevant municipality.

## **2018 plans and hoped-for funding**

We should have about \$1,600 on hand after \$100 for food and coffee at the Dec. 7 film, our last activity of the current year.

All events planned for next year will be in conjunction with allied groups, but we'd rather not count on them to share expenses unless absolutely necessary.

\$1,200 graphic design (environment theme) and 200 signs

\$200 food and any other expenses for Jan. 21 environmental justice film "Laid To Waste" at Holy Trinity Church, West Chester

\$200 food and any other expenses for Feb. 25 panel on environmental and climate change at Unitarian Congregation, West Chester, with Richard Whiteford, Dianne Herrin, Chrissy Houlahan (all speakers confirmed)

\$400 publicity, food, awards, etc. for Earth Day gathering and march on Sunday April 22: speakers on the Court House corner, march to Unitarian Congregation, talk and refreshments there. Also will promote planting of street trees (with Public Works and Pilligalli funding, if available) and on private property (hope for discount from local supplier, with property owners paying costs)

\$200 for frozen yogurt or ice cream at May picnic in Everhart Park

\$550 summer community event at the Melton Center: space rental, refreshments, environmental and anti-mosquito paraphernalia (fly swatters, non-toxic mosquito-repellent, larvicide, etc.) for children and families

\$200 for frozen yogurt or ice cream at Sept. picnic in Everhart Park

\$200 expenses later in the fall for an outside speaker and refreshments at a Green Lawns event: how to grow lawns without harmful pesticides and herbicides.

= 3,150  
- 1,600 on hand at end of 2017  
= 1,550 needed for 2018

In the spring we'd like to organize a planning session for a couple of representatives from each of several local organizations oriented to environment and health: Sierra Club, 4CP, Save Open Space, Neighbors for Crebilly, anti-pipeline forces, Unitarian environmental justice group, etc. But we expect little or no expense.

We also plan to work with West Chester Borough to secure summer interns to inspect stagnant water, larvicide, etc., but we hope no expense to us.

We aren't sure of needs in the new communities we will be reaching out to in 2018, but it would be desirable to show them we can help on expenses there, like copying brochures for distribution. We need to develop sources of income but for now, besides Sierra Club, we have only a few donors.

Please let us know of any suggestions, questions, or offers on the above list of plans for 2018. We will keep you posted, and the focus now will be in building up our alliances, environmental outreach, and chemical-reduction efforts for next year,

With our sincere thanks and best wishes,

Margaret Hudgings and Nathaniel Smith  
for the DSM Board