



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Fire Island National Seashore News Release

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Increased Vigilance for West Nile Virus on Fire Island WNV Detected in One Mosquito Sample Collected near Fire Island Pines

Patchogue, New York— Fire Island National Seashore announced today that a sample of mosquitoes infected with West Nile virus (WNV) has been found on Fire Island. The National Park Service collected the mosquitoes on July 29 from a gravid trap on the federal land just west of Fire Island Pines. The mosquitoes were from a trap set by the Park as part of its weekly monitoring program. Testing was done by the New York State Department of Health, Arthropod- Borne Disease Program, in Albany. This program is a collaborative effort between the Park and Suffolk County Department of Health Services, which announced the positive results on August 14. Although there have been dozens of WNV- infected dead birds throughout Suffolk County, none of these have been found within the boundaries of Fire Island National Seashore.

The National Park Service works closely with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Suffolk County Vector Control, and local Fire Island and Long Island municipalities to determine the best course of action to protect residents, visitors and employees of the Seashore. When threats to human health (such as the presence of West Nile virus) occur, actions to protect the public may include control methods such as applying larvicide or spraying. The public will be notified 24 hours in advance of any spray event. Information on the date and exact location of any spraying can be found on the Suffolk County web site at www.suffolkcountyny.gov/health or by calling 631- 852- 4939. Suffolk County Vector Control is currently authorized to spray within the Fire Island communities, including Fire Island Pines, using ultra low volume backpack or truck- mounted sprayers.

The park is continuing its surveillance program to monitor the severity and extent of West Nile virus in the Seashore. As per the Park's standard operation procedures, there will be an amplified surveillance in the area where West Nile virus has been detected.

(more)

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Mosquitoes can transmit both West Nile virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) from an infected bird to humans and other animals. However, mosquitoes are a natural part of a healthy salt marsh ecology. The larvae and adults provide food for many kinds of wildlife, including other insects, fish, birds, and bats. Some measures taken to control mosquito populations, such as spraying insecticides, adversely affect the health of fish and other wildlife living in the wetlands. Insecticides may also filter very quickly through the soil to the water table and could possibly infiltrate the water we drink. Therefore, any actions taken to protect human health through the control of mosquitoes must be weighed very heavily.

Residents, visitors and staff are advised to avoid mosquito- infested areas. If contact with mosquitoes is unavoidable, it is advisable to wear protective clothing and use an effective insect repellent, such as one containing at least 30% DEET. Non- DEET repellents (e.g. herbal- based sprays) are also effective. (Use much less repellent for children; DEET should only be used with extreme caution on children under age 3.) People most at risk of becoming ill from West Nile virus are those over 50 years of age or whose immune system is impaired. Such people are advised to stay away from areas with mosquitoes.

For general information on West Nile virus, please contact your local health department. Information can also be obtained from the [CDC](#), [New York State](#) or [Suffolk County WNV](#) web sites, or one of the park visitor centers. For more information about Fire Island National Seashore’s mosquito monitoring program, visit the park’s web site: <http://www.nps.gov/fiis>. If you have information or questions for the park, please contact our headquarters at 631- 687- 4750.

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Biological technician in protective suit collects mosquitoes from both gravid traps (left) and light traps (right) that have been set up at appropriate study sites within Fire Island National Seashore.



Back in the lab, a park biologist empties the traps, examines and sorts the mosquitoes by species, then properly packages the samples (“pools”) and sends them to the lab for examination.

NPS Photos

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