

Mosquitoes and Stormwater Ponds...Testing the Perception

Michael J. Paul¹ and Kristen L. Pavlik²

¹Biology Department, Howard University, 415 College Street, NW, Washington, DC 20059

²Tetra Tech, Inc., 10045 Red Run Blvd., Ste. 110, Owings Mills, MD 21117

Biographical Sketch of Presenting Author

Kristen Pavlik is an aquatic biologist for Tetra Tech, Inc. She is currently assisting the US EPA with the implementation of the national Wadeable Streams Assessment project. She is also the technical lead for a countywide biological monitoring program (Howard County), and monthly stormwater sampling (Anne Arundel County), both in Maryland. She has also been involved in field sampling, laboratory sample processing and taxonomy, data management, QA/QC, and report writing.

Abstract

Mosquitoes are important pests and disease vectors, whose management is often a top priority in areas affected by some of the diseases they carry. The life cycle of important pest species relies on standing water. In response to concerns about mosquito breeding in stormwater ponds, we studied the distribution of mosquito populations, especially those associated with stormwater ponds, during the summer of 2003 in Prince George's County, Maryland. We designed and implemented a survey of different areas, including those with stormwater management ponds, to determine the distribution of mosquito populations. Twenty-nine randomly selected stormwater ponds were selected for sampling, as well as standing water in a variety of different land use areas: 14 forested, 2 high-density residential, 6 low-density residential, 8 agricultural, and 3 urban. At each pond, 20 dips were made along the periphery using a telescoping dip pole with a 750 ml sample container. Mosquito larvae and pupae were collected at all of the other land uses using a baster and sieve. Standing water habitats included, but were not limited to, water-filled tree holes, puddles, wheel ruts or other surface impressions, birdbaths, containers (e.g., garbage can lids, flower pots), and abandoned tires. The number of samples and volume sampled were recorded, along with semi-quantitative data on the nature of the sampling site. Mosquito larvae and pupae were rarely found in pond samples, (an average of 1 individual in 5 of 29 ponds, or 17%). By contrast, they were much more commonly found in all other habitat types, with the highest numbers (by far) found in standing water from agricultural, forested, and residential areas. Many of the individual samples from these areas yielded, on average, several hundreds (sometimes thousands) of individuals per sample, regardless of the type of site. Analysis of these data and ancillary factors suggest that well designed and maintained stormwater retention ponds are an insignificant source of mosquitoes in the County.