

Action being taken to reduce midges near Capitol Beach

Ken Bradshaw, President of the Capitol Beach Community Association, announced today that the association has a plan to reduce midges from Capitol Beach Lake. "We briefed the Mayor's Office and the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department on the plan late last week and gained their support," said Bradshaw. The three pronged plan involves:

- 1) Stocking fish to eat midge larvae.
- 2) Sampling for larvae.
- 3) Treating the lake with larvicide to destroy the midge in its larval stage before they become adult flies and nuisances to area residents.

At the heart of the plan is restoring the fish population in the lake so that nature may take its course and naturally control the problem. In 2004, over 50,000 fish were stocked in the lake, and in 2005 another 87,000 were added. This year so far over 120,000 fish have been stocked, with another 30,000 scheduled for mid-summer. "Based on advice we have received from many experts, the very best and only true long term solution is to get the fish population up so they will eat the midge larvae," said Bradshaw. We have spent thousands of dollars doing exactly that and we will continue to stock fish. Combining re-stocking of the lake with fish who feed on the midge larva with larviciding activities will help limit the number of flies who reach the adult stage.

In addition, the association has hired a consultant, Dr. Tom Janousek, to guide them on methods that can be used to control the midges. Janousek is an entomologist with a broad background and extensive experience in the mid-west. Said Janousek, "We are sampling the mud in the bottom in the lake for larvae. Our research has found that we need to target any treatment to areas with the highest concentration of larvae." Sampling will begin Monday and continue throughout the summer. "One thing I'd like to emphasize," said Janousek, "is that this problem may take months to resolve. Everyone that we talked to that had dealt with midge problems made it clear that quick fixes do not work and are a waste of money."

Unfortunately, record setting temperatures in early April apparently resulted in an early midge hatch this year. In this part of the country, hatches do not normally occur until mid May. Homeowners in the Capitol Beach area can take some actions to reduce the impact of midges, such as turning off outside lights and spraying their own property with over-the-counter pyrethroid (e.g. permethrin, pyrethrin) pesticides commonly used to control adult mosquitoes. Pesticides must always be used according to the label. Bug zappers, while effective in killing midges, may attract more midges. Midges are not attracted to carbon dioxide, so some machines designed to attract and kill mosquitoes will not work.

Dr. Bruce Dart, Director of the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, said, "Capitol Beach Community Association is on the right track to take care of this frustrating midge situation." Health officials have declined requests to authorize the use of City equipment to spray to kill adult midges in the area because the midges pose no known health risk. Said Dart, "If the health of the residents was in danger, we would have sprayed a long time ago. However, midges are not known to transmit diseases to people and we cannot justify spraying on any other basis."

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