



**Testimony Submitted by Linda Orel, Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions regarding H.1126, *An Act Relative to the Mosquito Borne Disease Control Board***

**Before the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources & Agriculture**

**July 21, 2011**

The Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC) thanks Chairman Pacheco and Chairwoman Gobi for the opportunity to testify on H.1126, *An Act Relative to the Mosquito Borne Disease Control Board*. H.1126 would benefit the environment and public health by making important improvements to the current law by reconfiguring the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board and improving coordination of mosquito control practices. MACC supports this bill and recommends that it be reported favorably and move toward passage.

MACC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating and supporting the 351 Conservation Commissions and promoting the protection of wetlands and other water resources, acquisition and stewardship of conservation land and preservation of biodiversity.

The current law, Chapter 252 of the General Laws, *Improvement of Lowland and Swamps*, is wrongly and ambiguously entitled. The law is also outdated, not based on current science and does not facilitate efficient coordination of mosquito control practices with public health and ecological expertise within state and local agencies.

The nine separate mosquito control districts are overseen by the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board, but the law needs to be clarified to ensure that mosquito control practices are coordinated and conducted in a consistent manner to optimize protection of public health and the environment.

The Reclamation Board presently has representatives from three agencies: Department of Agricultural Resources, Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. The state Department of Public Health (DPH) and Department of Fish and Game (DFG) do not have seats on the current Board even though their expertise is important to an effective mosquito control program. The Centers for Disease Control and the Environmental Protection Agency recommend that public health agencies and agencies with expertise in ecological management and wildlife biology be

involved in mosquito control. Mosquito borne diseases have complex interactions with a variety of wildlife species and habitats, affecting human health risk<sup>1</sup>.

The proposed legislation adds a seat to the Reclamation Board for DFG which can help the Board optimize effectiveness of interventions to minimize public health risks of mosquito borne diseases as well as effects on sensitive ecosystems.

The proposed legislation would add two seats to the Reclamation Board for DPH, one for each of the two branches of the agency (infectious disease and environmental health).

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) seat is proposed to be eliminated in the bill. This is mainly to keep the Board with an odd number of members for voting purposes. MACC would not be opposed to DCR retaining their seat, although then another should also be added.

The bill would also improve coordination of standard practices through the Board, ensuring that evolving improvements in mosquito control are applied across all mosquito control districts. It would provide for a statewide Integrated Pest Management Plan. The Board already has developed extensive documents that could serve this purpose, while the bill would ensure that all mosquito districts follow the statewide plan consistently. It would also update the Board's authority and responsibilities in regards to responding to mosquito borne disease outbreaks.

MACC urges the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture to support passage of H.1126, *An Act Relative to the Mosquito Borne Disease Control Board*.

If you have questions, please contact Linda Orel, Executive Director at [Linda.Orel@maccweb.org](mailto:Linda.Orel@maccweb.org) or 617-489-3930.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.epa.gov/opp00001/health/mosquitoes/mosquitojoint.htm>, *Joint Statement on Mosquito Control in the United States from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*, April 10, 2007.