LETTERS

State's mosquito spray poses a health threat

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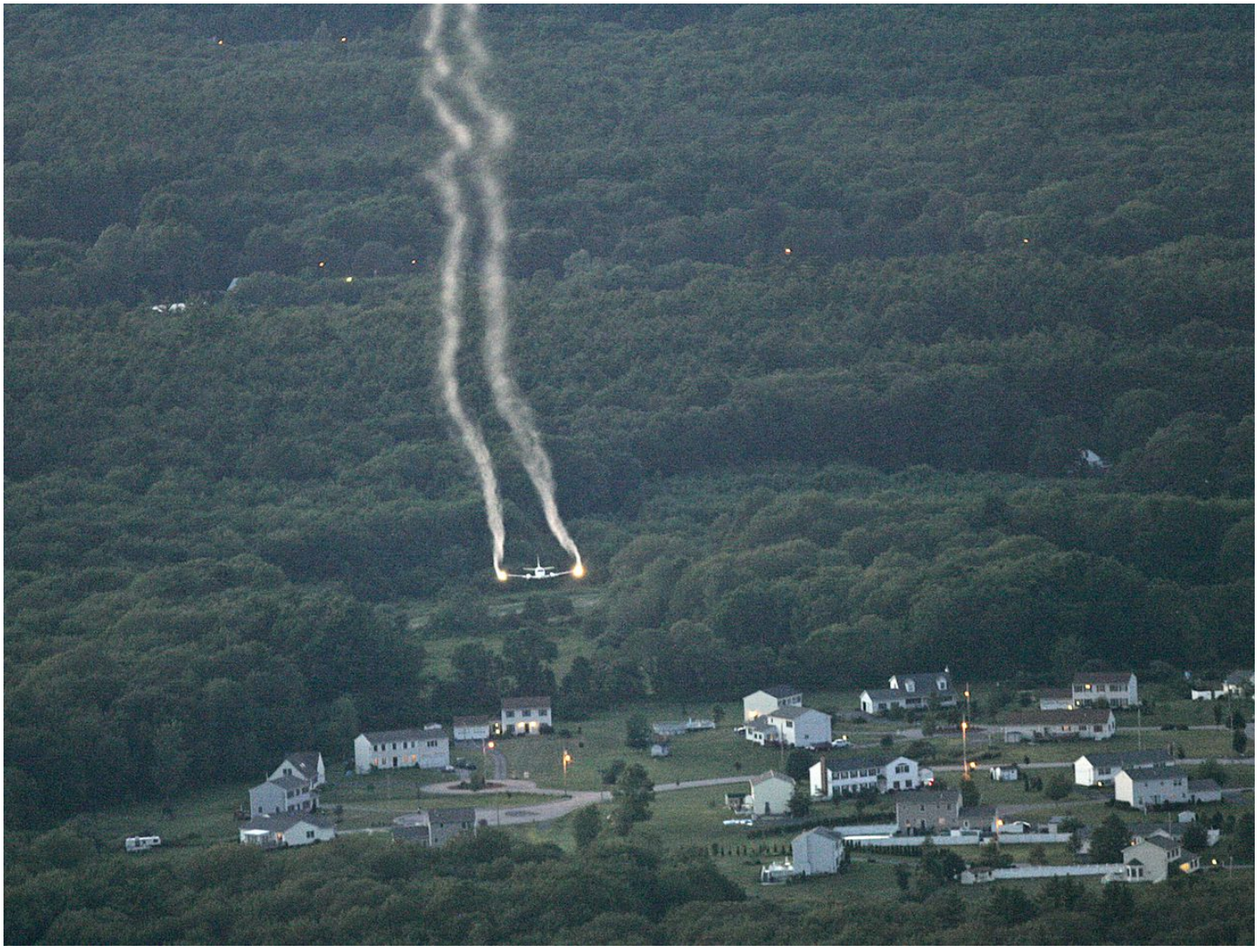

The state sprayed for mosquitoes carrying Eastern equine encephalitis over Taunton in August 2006. RYAN, DAVID L GLOBE STAFF

With use of 'forever chemicals,' Mass. trades one ill for another

As an environmental lawyer and a toxicologist with nearly 60 years of collective experience with hazardous waste sites, we were disheartened by David Abel's article " 'Forever chemicals' found in Mass. mosquito spray" (Page A1, Dec. 2), which detailed the presence of PFAS in Anvil 10+10, the mosquito insecticide that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has been spraying aerially over towns throughout the state. We live in Stow, where spraying was conducted over our houses and organic gardens.

It is a sad irony that with the heightened focus and enormous investment of resources by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to protect the public from potential dangers of minuscule PFAS

concentrations, another state agency is unwittingly releasing this toxic chemical onto private and public lands.

This mosquito control practice essentially trades one public health threat, Eastern equine encephalitis, for another, the degradation of our water supplies.

How are we to advise our clients to install costly treatment systems to reduce PFAS in drinking water supply wells to the Department of Environmental Protection's standards in the small parts per trillion when our own state government is broadcast-spraying a pesticide with PFAS concentrations many times greater? As residents with private wells and as environmental professionals working to clean up PFAS in our groundwater and surface waters, we implore the Commonwealth to end its aerial spraying.

Susan Crane

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Crane is an environmental lawyer, and Rudiman is a toxicologist who works in risk assessment.

There are better alternatives to control mosquitoes

In the 1970s, it was common for towns to routinely spray several times a year to "control" various pests including mosquitoes. Sevin, malathion, and other toxics were used. In 1979, a statewide committee was formed to examine the role of the Pesticide Board and develop a Generic Environmental Impact Report on the use and impact of pesticides in mosquito control. I was on the citizens advisory committee. The report was completed but never adopted until it was revised almost 20 years later.

The use of aerial spraying was heavily criticized as being ineffective and environmentally damaging. I recall one professional saying, “To be effective, a drop of spray must hit the insect, like going after a butterfly with a machine gun.”

There are so many alternatives for mosquito control: most simply, public education on eliminating standing water where mosquitoes breed; then, CO_2 traps to monitor population; Bti in wetlands and Altosid briquets in storm drains, both for larval control; and finally, if necessary, truck spraying with a pyrethroid against EEE, but with a recognition of the ineffectiveness of such broadcasting.

As has been shown, aerial spraying is a disastrous method with negative side effects. We are good at inventing toxic chemicals but not so good at controlling their uses or unintended consequences.

Carolyn Bishop

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