



Maryland Department of Agriculture

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MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

LEGISLATIVE COMMENT

DATE: March 12, 2019

BILL NUMBER: HOUSE BILL 1353

SHORT TITLE: AGRICULTURE - NUISANCE INSECTS

MDA POSITION: SUPPORT

EXPLANATION:

House Bill 1353 will allow the Secretary of the Maryland Department of Agriculture to carry out a Nuisance Insects Program partnering with local jurisdictions to control or eliminate certain insects.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Chapters 854 and 585 of 2016 authorized the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in conjunction with the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), to implement a program to control the spread of black flies in the State. The program was implemented initially in Washington County.

The black fly treatment and monitoring pilot project was implemented during the summer of 2017 on the Potomac River in Washington County. *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis (Bti)* was applied by helicopter. *Bti* is a naturally occurring soil bacterium that has been demonstrated to be non-toxic to humans, mammals, birds, fish and most invertebrates. Maryland's pilot program was modeled heavily on Pennsylvania's program, which has been in effect since the 1980s.

The results of the pilot program showed that the *Bti* treatments worked as intended and there was a noticeable drop in the black fly population within the areas treated on the Potomac River.

House Bill 1353 will build off of the successful pilot program by establishing the Nuisance Insects Program. To the extent funding is available, the Secretary of the Maryland Department of Agriculture can establish a program to control or eliminate nuisance insects in the State. The nuisance insects program would be set up very similar to the MDA Mosquito Control Program in

that counties across the state can voluntarily participate in the program, sharing the cost with the state.

If you have additional questions, please contact Cassie Shirk, Director of Legislation and Governmental Affairs, at cassie.shirk@maryland.gov or 410-841-5886.