PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release
Friday, October 25, 2019

Contact: Irene Donohue (631) 852-8400
Irene.donohue@suffolkcountyny.gov

Suffolk County Legislator Bridget Fleming, with Deputy County Executive Jon Kaiman, East Hampton Supervisor Peter Van Scoyoc, East Hampton Town Board Members Kathee Burke-Gonzalez and David Lys, East Hampton Town Natural Resource and Town Planning Department Staff and Accabonac Protection Committee members discuss the 2019 results of the Accabonac Harbor Mosquito Testing Program overlooking Accabonac Harbor at the home of Perfect Earth Founder & President, Edwina von Gal and her dog, Clover, in the center.

Accabonac Harbor, Springs, East Hampton NY – Officials announced today the results of an ongoing cooperative program that has reduced the use of the chemical spray methoprene on Accabonac Harbor by 81%, and reduced the cost of the mosquito control progam on the Harbor by 77%, while maintaining effective control of the biting black mosquito population in the area, by treating only hotspots identified as prime breeding areas of mosquitos. The innovative program of Suffolk County Vector Control (SCVC), East Hampton Town Trustees, the Nature Conservancy (TNC), and volunteer citizen scientists, is based on specific mosquito larvae and pupae data gathered by samplers on the marsh, which is entered according to GPS location, into a mobile phone app designed for the program. The information is forwarded to Suffolk County Vector Control (SCVC) staff, who review the data for a treatment decision. If treatment is deemed necessary, a revised map is sent to the helicopter pilot to adjust the spray blocks at Accabonac Harbor to only target those 'hot spots' identified within the treatment block. The marsh area is host to diverse wildlife and since implementation of the program began in 2017, observers have reported increases in native vegetation such as spartina, dragonflies and divers bird species. A pair of bald eagles has established a nest on the marsh.

In 2017, the cooperative team initiated a 5-week pilot project to reduce pesticide applications to Accabonac Harbor through a targeted approach to mosquito larvicide treatments based on mapping of mosquito breeding locations. The pilot program focused on 2 spray blocks in the southern section of Accabonac Harbor, allowing the partners to assess the feasibility of the targeted approach to achieve the end goal of reduced pesticide use. As the pilot program resulted in a substantial reduction of spray blocks, the program was expanded for 2018.

During 2018, the program was fully implemented to cover the summer mosquito aerial larvicide season from June through August and sample all 7 aerial treatment blocks. As the result

of sampling, including close to 6,000 GIS data points over the 11 weeks where individual mosquito dips were conducted, it was determined that treatment was only required on 7 of the 11 weeks studied. Data from the team showed that in the 2018 season, of the 190 acre treatment blocks, less than half of the acres were shown to breed mosquitoes regularly and allowed SCVC to cut the spray blocks dramatically. The reduction of treatment block acres in 2018 resulted in cost savings of $18,000 between less pesticide usage and helicopter flight hours treating the site. In addition, the treatments targeting the identified points by the team showed breeding was predominantly along the upper marsh edge, moving the applications further away from nesting birds, and from the harbor water's edge.

In addition, during 2018, SCVC shifted more aerial larvicide applications to a quick acting and non-residual Bti and methoprene granule product, moving away from the residual methoprene liquid and Bti mix. The granule product reduces non-target impacts from drift issues compared to the liquid. Using the granule material allowed the helicopter pilot to better target the upland marsh edge where the mosquito larvae are concentrated. Cost savings were realized despite the higher per-acre cost of the products which have less impact on the natural environment, because of the drastic reduction in acres treated and product used.

Results announced today from the 2019 season, show a continued reduction in pesticide use, cost of the program, and area sprayed. Of the 13 week sampling season in 2019, pesticides were applied in only 4 weeks. The attached map shows a total 81% reduction of the area treated, from almost 2,500 aggregate acres treated in 2016, before implementation of the program, to less than 500 aggregate acres in 2019. As the attached chart indicates, overall costs have been reduced by 77%.

During sampling, participants observed opportunities to restore natural features of the

wetlands in order to increase water flow, eliminate standing water, and increase migration of natural predators of mosquitoes, further reducing the mosquito population and so reducing the need for chemical treatment. It is anticipated that the cooperative team will explore further restoration of the marsh consistent with lessons learned during the cooperative program, to further reduce the mosquito population by restoring balance to the food chain and conditions of the ecosystem.

In attendance at today's announcement at the home of Edwina Von Gal, of the Perfect Earth Project, were Ms. Von Gal, Deputy Suffolk County Executive Jon Kaiman, Legislator Bridget Fleming, Tom Iwanejko, Superintendent of Suffolk County Vector Control, East Hampton Town Supervisor Peter Van Scoyoc, East Hampton Town Councilmembers David Lys and Kathee Burke-Gonzalez, East Hampton Town Trustees Susan McGraw-Keber and John Aldred, Kim Shaw and Samantha Klein of East Hampton Town Natural Resources and Eleni Nikolopoulos of the East Hampton Town Planning Department, as well as Christine Tylee of Group for the East End, and Patrice Dalton, Loring Bolger, and Kevin Bishop of the Accabonac Protection Committee, volunteer participants in the project.

Suffolk County Legislator Bridget Fleming said, "The collaboration between Suffolk County, East Hampton Town Trustees, East Hampton Town Planning and Natural Resources Departments, the non-profit Nature Conservancy, and our citizen scientists who help to target mosquito breeding grounds, is a partnership that serves as a model of innovative collaboration to meet the challenging issues of our region. It is particularly heartening to see such dramatic reductions in the use of methoprene after years of inaction that was based on disagreements among stakeholders as to the impacts of the pesticide. This effort will not only improve water

quality and the health of the harbor and the saltmarsh by drastically reducing pesticide use, it greatly reduces the cost of the mosquito control program, while demonstrating that compromise and collaboration can have great benefits to our community. We have much work to do still to meet our goal, but the success of this program shows great promise for the future."

East Hampton Town Supervisor Peter Van Scoyoc stated, "Thanks to the effective collaboration between private citizens, environmental groups, and local and county government, we have been able to nearly eliminate the use of pesticides while protecting public health and the health of our precious environment."

East Hampton Town Trustee Susan McGraw Keber explained, "A citizen scientist program, this has proven to be successful in the reduction in the pesticide application of Methoprene and identification of mosquito larvae hotspots. We are now able to consider saltmarsh restoration- I'm very proud of our concerted efforts to assist Suffolk County Vector Control."

Tom Iwanejko, Superintendent of Suffolk County Vector Control who has a background in saltmarsh restoration, said, "We reduced the areas sprayed in 2019 by 81% from 2018 and we reduced the frequency of spraying to just 4 times over the summer from over 10 in 2016. In 2019, we continued to use a granulated formula of BTI and methoprene that was targeted only at the larval hot spots and less likely to reach the harbor. While public health is our primary focus, we were able to reduce the amount of pesticide and remain effective, with less potential impacts to the environment and be cost efficient. It is a win for all involved."