Message

From: Piper, Maya [Piper.Maya@epa.gov]
Sent: 11/13/2020 3:21:51 PM
To: Bohnenblust, Eric [Bohnenblust.Eric@epa.gov]
Subject: Press Inquiry: Scienceline, Oxitec Mosquitoes, DDL: 11/25
Attachments: Scienceline Press Inquiry.docx

Flag: Follow up

Hi Eric,

Please find my draft responses to the Scienceline press inquiry attached. Almost all of the responses were pulled from previously used and approved language. No rush on this – the reporter's deadline is 11/25.

Thanks,

Maya Piper *(she/her/hers)*
Communications Branch
Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office: (202) 731-8966 | Cell: (231) 493-2745

From: Piper, Maya
Sent: Monday, November 9, 2020 4:28 PM
To: Bohnenblust, Eric <Bohnenblust.Eric@epa.gov>
Subject: FW: Timely interview request!

Hi Eric,

Just wanted to give you a heads-up that we received this lengthy press inquiry. Luckily, it isn't due until 11/25. I'll start drafting responses and send them over to you later this week.

Best,

Maya Piper *(she/her/hers)*
Communications Branch
Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office: (202) 731-8966 | Cell: (231) 493-2745

From: Sullivan, Melissa <sullivan.melissa@epa.gov>
Sent: Monday, November 9, 2020 3:36 PM
To: Dennis, Allison <Dennis.Allison@epa.gov>; Lieberman, Paige <Lieberman.Paige@epa.gov>; OPP FEAD CSB <OPP_FEAD_CSB@epa.gov>; Siedschlag, Gregory <Siedschlag.Gregory@epa.gov>
Cc: Pierce, Alison <Pierce.Alison@epa.gov>; Dunton, Cheryl <Dunton.Cheryl@epa.gov>
Subject: FW: Timely interview request!

Good afternoon,

We received an interview request from a Scienceline reporter.

Deadline is 11/25.

Questions below.

Would I still be able to set up a phone interview with Robert McNally or anyone else that works in the Biopesticides and Pollution Prevention Division?

Here are some of my questions:

1. Why did the U.S. EPA seek public comments on the new Oxitec OX5034 mosquito?

2. I was told by a source at the Florida Keys Environmental Coalition that over 33,000 public comments were submitted in opposition to this technology and 56 comments were submitted in support of this technology. Is this true?

3. Do you feel like the U.S. EPA gave a fair hearing to those who were against the OX5034?

4. People from the Florida Keys Environmental Coalition and some other agencies argue that public comments against Oxitec were ignored by the U.S. EPA and that the Florida Keys community is now being forced into this Ox5034 experiment against their will. Can you comment on this?

5. The Center for Food Safety thinks that the OX5034 consultation should have involved the National Marine Fisheries Service and/or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to assess if there would be threatened and endangered species in Monroe County and Harris County, as well as listed species in surrounding counties. The Center for Food Safety said that Oxitec failed to follow the Endangered Species Act mandated procedures. Do you agree with this and that this step of consultation is necessary for ensuring the safety of these OX5034 mosquitoes for wildlife? Here is the link to their report too: https://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/files/2020-06-12-esa-60-day-noi-letter-final_08955.pdf

6. In an article by Natalie Kofler and Jennifer Kuzma, they say that "The EPA did not convene an independent, external scientific advisory panel to review Oxitec's claim; the agency's risk assessment was only made publicly available after their approval decision and we know of no peer-reviewed articles on this particular GM mosquito strain." They also say "And herein lies our concern: Risks should not be assessed behind closed doors between technology developers and EPA employees. As designed, the EPA risk assessment process privileges private entities over the American public." Can you comment on this and why the authors said these things?

7. People such as Helen Wallace from GeneWatch UK, say that the EPA is not putting alternatives up for debate to combat mosquitoes. They question why the EPA is focusing on this single technology rather than other tactics to help with mosquito control. Could you comment on this?

8. It seems like there are a lot of unknowns about this Ox5034 mosquito that some scientists would like answers to, such as if this mosquito could spread antibiotic resistance to tetracycline, cause another mosquito species to transmit viruses like Zika and dengue, disturb endangered species, that the self-limiting gene could cause damages for crop soil and water supply once these dead male mosquitoes decompose. Do you think all of these unknowns I listed, as well as others, do pose negligible risk?

9. Do you know that Oxitec's Ox5034 mosquito is safe and will reduce the Aedes aegypti mosquito population as well as disease? People of the Florida Keys Environmental Coalition, Center for Food Safety, and Friends of the Earth U.S have said that Oxitec and the EPA don't have the evidence to support that this mosquito is safe and that no data has been made available to the public. They also argue that Oxitec has never had a successful experiment. Can you comment on these statements please and why people are saying this?

Thank you,
Melissa

Melissa A. Sullivan
Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
202 913-3840
Sullivan.Melissa@epa.gov

From: Taylor White <tcw292@nyu.edu>
Sent: Monday, November 9, 2020 3:32 PM
To: Sullivan, Melissa <sullivan.melissa@epa.gov>
Subject: Re: Timely interview request!

Hi Melissa,

Thank you for your response. My deadline would be November 25th. Would I still be able to set up a phone interview with Robert McNally or anyone else that works in the Biopesticides and Pollution Prevention Division?

Here are some of my questions:

1. Why did the U.S. EPA seek public comments on the new Oxitec OX5034 mosquito?

2. I was told by a source at the Florida Keys Environmental Coalition that over 33,000 public comments were submitted in opposition to this technology and 56 comments were submitted in support of this technology. Is this true?

3. Do you feel like the U.S. EPA gave a fair hearing to those who were against the OX5034?

4. People from the Florida Keys Environmental Coalition and some other agencies argue that public comments against Oxitec were ignored by the U.S. EPA and that the Florida Keys community is now being forced into this Ox5034 experiment against their will. Can you comment on this?

5. The Center for Food Safety thinks that the OX5034 consultation should have involved the National Marine Fisheries Service and/or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to assess if there would be threatened and endangered species in Monroe County and Harris County, as well as listed species in surrounding counties. The Center for Food Safety said that Oxitec failed to follow the Endangered Species Act mandated procedures. Do you agree with this and that this step of consultation is necessary for ensuring the safety of these OX5034 mosquitoes for wildlife? Here is the link to their report too: https://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/files/2020-06-12-esa-60-day-noi-letter-final_08955.pdf

6. In an article by Natalie Kofler and Jennifer Kuzma, they say that "The EPA did not convene an independent, external scientific advisory panel to review Oxitec's claim; the agency's risk assessment was only made publicly available after their approval decision and we know of no peer-reviewed articles on this particular GM mosquito strain." They also say "And herein lies our concern: Risks should not be assessed behind closed doors between technology developers and EPA employees. As designed, the EPA risk assessment process privileges private entities over the American public." Can you comment on this and why the authors said these things?

7. People such as Helen Wallace from GeneWatch UK, say that the EPA is not putting alternatives up for debate to combat mosquitoes. They question why the EPA is focusing on this single technology rather than other tactics to help with mosquito control. Could you comment on this?

8. It seems like there are a lot of unknowns about this Ox5034 mosquito that some scientists would like answers to, such as if this mosquito could spread antibiotic resistance to tetracycline, cause another mosquito species to transmit viruses like Zika and dengue, disturb endangered species, that the self-limiting gene could cause damages for crop soil and

water supply once these dead male mosquitoes decompose. Do you think all of these unknowns I listed, as well as others, do pose negligible risk?

9. Do you know that Oxitec's Ox5034 mosquito is safe and will reduce the Aedes aegypti mosquito population as well as disease? People of the Florida Keys Environmental Coalition, Center for Food Safety, and Friends of the Earth U.S have said that Oxitec and the EPA don't have the evidence to support that this mosquito is safe and that no data has been made available to the public. They also argue that Oxitec has never had a successful experiment. Can you comment on these statements please and why people are saying this?

Kindest regards,

Taylor
taylorwhitewrites.com

On Mon, Nov 9, 2020 at 10:55 AM Sullivan, Melissa <sullivan.melissa@epa.gov> wrote:

> Good morning Taylor,
>
> I received your inquiry from a colleague.
>
> Can you please share your list of specific questions and your deadline?
>
> Thank you,
>
> Melissa
>
> Melissa A. Sullivan
>
> Office of Public Affairs
>
> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
>
> 202 913-3840
>
> Sullivan.Melissa@epa.gov

From: Taylor White <tcw292@nyu.edu>
Sent: Monday, November 02, 2020 10:07 AM
To: BPPDFRNotices <BPPDFRNotices@epa.gov>
Subject: Timely interview request!

Hi U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,

My name is Taylor White and I'm writing a story for scienceline.org about Oxitec mosquitoes. I wanted to know if I could speak with Robert McNally about these mosquitoes, the deployment approval for Florida Keys, and any public comments the EPA received before October 11, 2019. Would he be available anytime this week or next?

Kindest regards,

Taylor

taylorwhitewrites.com