

Meagan Morrison Hull



February 24, 2021

President Joseph Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington DC 20500

Subject: Urgent request to revoke EPA's Pesticide Experimental Use Permit (EUP) for genetically engineered mosquitoes in the Florida Keys (EPA-HQ-OPP-2019-0274-0001)

Dear President Biden:

I am writing after learning of your pledge to follow science instead of corporate interests. I represent residents of the Florida Keys and a coalition of organizations that have signed onto this letter due to concerns about the March 2021 release of over half a billion experimental genetically engineered (GE) mosquitoes in the backyards of Keys residents.

The Trump administration and Oxitec lobbyists and executives colluded to release these experimental insects in the Florida Keys without consideration of the potential human health impacts, without a proper Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and without regard for Florida Keys residents' opposition. (See enclosed article and FOIA documents.)

Residents in the area intended for release, Key Haven, who attended the most meetings and were the most educated on the issue voted against it in a public referendum. The area intended for release prior to Key Haven, Key West, passed a resolution opposing the release because of Oxitec's failure to satisfy the scientific questions posed by the city council. Local and state politicians have also expressed concerns to the EPA, but their concerns have been ignored and their opposition disregarded. (See enclosed letter from U.S. Representative Debbie Mucarsel-Powell (FL-26) to EPA.)

The EPA received over 31,000 public comments which were largely opposed to the release prior to granting the EUP. Additionally, a quarter of a million U.S. residents signed a petition opposing the proposed release.

Residents' concerns include the following:

1) The GE mosquitoes are raised in tetracycline. Physicians are very concerned that they could spread antibiotic-resistant bacteria through the community. Many physicians in the Keys signed a statement calling for testing for antibiotic-resistant bacteria to be done prior to any attempts to release these mosquitoes. Oxitec has refused to allow independent testing to determine if antibiotic-resistant bacteria are, in fact, present. (See enclosed letter from physicians.)

2) Despite Oxitec's repeated claims to the contrary, a recently published peer-reviewed study documented that biting females will be included in the release. Further, the study found that the DNA of insects that are genetically engineered to make them sterile reverts to their pre-engineered state and the insects regain their ability to reproduce. (See enclosed study #1.) What happens when residents are bitten by these mosquitoes? Are they allergenic?

3) EPA approved the experimental release, contingent upon it being limited to sterile male mosquitoes. EPA stated that the agency would stop the experiment if any females are released. In light of the new evidence that females will be included in the release as per the study referred to in point #2 above, the experiment should not take place. (See enclosed EPA EUP.)

4) Another recent peer-reviewed study found that some genetically modified mosquitoes can increase the risk of malaria transmission. Can these genetically engineered mosquitoes also increase the risk of transmission of other mosquito-borne diseases like Zika, Chikungunya, Yellow Fever? (See enclosed study #2.)

5) Similar experiments in the Cayman Islands and Brazil yielded results significantly lower than reported by Oxitec to elected officials, the public, and indeed, to the EPA. A peer-reviewed study published by Yale scientists following the completion of the experiment in Brazil found that despite Oxitec's claims to the contrary, some fertile GE mosquitoes were released and bred with the local population of mosquitoes. Yale scientists expressed concern that the mosquito population could be more virulent as a result. (See enclosed study #3.)

6) Freedom of Information Act requests in the Cayman Islands disclosed that Oxitec's experimental release in the Cayman Islands was a failure. (See enclosed article and FOIA documents.)

7) Florida Keys' ecosystem is fragile and residents are concerned about the potential impact of the GE insects on endangered species, which has not been studied.

Florida Keys residents have used every available channel of communication to express their opposition to this experimental release. Residents have attended many meetings and repeatedly contacted the Florida Keys Mosquito Control District and the Trump EPA. Local and state politicians have also expressed concerns to the EPA, but the concerns have been ignored and all opposition disregarded. We urgently request your intervention to stop this unwanted and risky experiment so that thorough studies can be carried out.

Please see enclosed for scientific studies and further information relevant to this urgent matter.

Thank you for your prompt attention.
Sincerely,

Meagan Morrison Hull
Concerned Resident of the Florida Keys

And the following public interest nonprofit organizations, scientists and health practitioners:

Afar Pastoralist Development Association
Clean Label Project
Community Alliance for Global Justice
Dr. Eva Novotny
Family Farm Defenders
Florida Keys Environmental Coalition
Friends of the Earth
Global Justice Ecology Project
GM Watch
GMO Free Florida
GMO Science
GMO/Toxin Free USA
Health Research Institute
Institute for Responsible Technology
Kamayan Farm
Lois Breault-Melican, Former Board Member, American Chestnut
Foundation
Michele DeBello, Nutritionist
Moms Across America
Rural Education Action Project (DBA Rural Vermont)
Sustainable Home Supply LLC
Serendipity Healthcare Foundation
Salma Qureshi MD LLC
Washington Biotechnology Action Council
Yogi In Ya Key West