

Genetically Modified Mosquitos Have Been Approved for Release in Florida

The Florida Keys Mosquito Control District (FKMCD) has approved the trial release of genetically modified mosquitos. Oxitec, the company responsible for developing the mosquitos, has received approval to release 750 million modified mosquitoes in Monroe County, Florida over a two year period. The release could begin as early as 2021, although exact times and locations have not been announced to the public.

The public was also not able to vote on this approval, as the Florida Keys Mosquito Control Board members rejected a referendum that would have given Monroe County voters the ability to reject the GM mosquito trial. Like they did in 2016. Control Board members have reported over 2,000 complaints from Florida residents in regards to the mosquitos. One point of contention is Oxitec's failure to provide a detailed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

With all the urgent crises facing our nation and the State of Florida – the Covid-19 pandemic, racial injustice, climate change – the administration has used tax dollars and government resources for a Jurassic Park experiment. Now the Monroe County Mosquito Control District has given the final permission needed. What could possibly go wrong? We don't know, because EPA unlawfully refused to seriously analyze environmental risks, now without further review of the risks, the experiment can proceed..."

Jaydee Hanson, Policy Director for the International Center for Technology Assessment and Center for Food Safety

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The company has genetically modified male mosquitos so that their offspring do not make it to adulthood. But a team of independent researchers discovered that some of the offspring do survive, leading to wild female mosquitos giving birth to mosquitos that reached sexual maturity. Early lab tests at Oxitec revealed that 3% of mosquito offspring survived. It's unclear if the company continued tested the sexual viability of the survived offspring, but it's unclear if slowly replacing the current mosquito population with a genetically modified alternative is a good idea for anyone other than the people profiting off of it.