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# SOUTH WALTON MOSQUITO HUNTERS TAKE TO THE SKY

SANTA ROSA BEACH, Fla (Mar 18, 2026) When one hears of mosquito control, they immediately think of the trucks traveling in our neighborhoods spraying a fog of chemicals designed to kill or control the pesky varmints who can spread disease.
So, it comes as a surprise for many to hear that drones are now joining the trucks as part of Walton County Mosquito Control (SWMD) District's arsenal to protect public and animal health.

SWMD is using specially equipped drones equipped for aerial treatment to control mosquitoes. Gerry Williams, operations manager for the District, tells 850 News that they first started using drones in 2022 after watching the success of agriculture and mosquito control drone use in other parts of Florida. "We started back then with one of our team members who was a licensed drone pilot." Williams says. "Then we gradually grew and reached a point where our board supported us with resources to add more drone staff and training."

The District uses social media to notify residents of the scheduled control activity whether drone or truck.

Williams says District technicians use EPA-approved products that are safe for public use with regulated aerial applications that also involve larvae-control on standing or stagnant water bodies.

The District says larvae control is important. According to their website, "By focusing on killing mosquitoes during their larval stage, they will never emerge into adults and bite people and never transmit mosquito-borne diseases."

In some parts of Florida, pesticide spraying that could enter water bodies is controversial because of the use of the bio-pesticide Methoprene.

Williams tells us that though the EPA has deemed Methoprene safe to use in fish-bearing waters due to its limited use in mosquito control, SWMD prefers to apply Methoprene-based larvicides only to man-made or closed systems to reduce exposure to "at risk" non-targets.

The District sprays in the day for larvae and at night for adult mosquitos.

Gerry Williams says the use of drones is more efficient in terms of expense and time. He gives credit to the fact that SWMD is a special taxing-district with a board of directors who,

Williams says, is closer to the citizens than some mosquito-control operations that are part of county government.

The SWMD website lists the following benefits of drone use:
* Minimal human influence on sensitive lands
* More precise treatments which equal more taxpayer value
* Accurate ecological representation
* Increased technician and civilian safety
* Decreased environmental footprint
* Increased time management and situational awareness

For more information: **https://www.southwaltonmosquitocontrol.org/**