

1215 K Street, Suite 2290
Sacramento, CA 95814
p 916.440.0826
f 916.231.2141
www.mvcac.org



May 28, 2009

Dear Editor:

The approaching warm weather months are celebrated with leisurely outdoor activities like barbecues, picnics and pool parties, but this summer Californians must do their part to fight the bite of mosquitoes. West Nile virus (WNV) season is underway and there are significant fiscal and regulatory issues jeopardizing effective mosquito control—putting the health and welfare of Californians at great risk.

Decreased revenues and state 'borrowing' will reduce critical disease surveillance and mosquito control resources for most California agencies. In addition, a recent federal court ruling will likely limit resources and impose enormous costs on mosquito and vector control agencies—leaving Californians without critical safeguards as the WNV season begins.

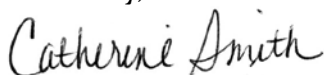
For more than 60 years, Californians have become accustomed to the efforts of their local mosquito and vector control agencies to reduce mosquito populations and prevent disease. However, the present challenges and roadblocks facing effective mosquito control require Californians to be aware of the steps they will need to personally take to fight the bite of harmful mosquitoes.

Public awareness of the limitations against mosquito and vector control agencies is imperative. Not only do Californians need to be aware of the precautionary efforts they need to take responsibility for, but also the impact that these regulatory issues will have on quality of life in California.

WNV transmission caused 15 deaths in California and sickened more than 438 others in 2008. Without effective mosquito control, this year is likely to make Californians even more vulnerable.

To address this grave concern, residents and legislators need to fight to ensure that mosquito and vector control districts can continue to protect the quality of life in California.

Sincerely,



Catherine Smith
Executive Director, Mosquito and Vector Control District of California
916-440-0826
casmith@mvcac.org

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NEWS RELEASE

May 28, 2009
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:
Catherine Smith, Executive Director
916-440-0826
casmith@mvcac.org

LEGISLATIVE DAY IN THE DISTRICT

SACRAMENTO, Calif.—The 2009 mosquito and West Nile virus season is underway and there are significant fiscal and regulatory issues that will likely prevent effective mosquito control, putting Californians at great risk.

Vector control districts across the state will host a Day in the District, which is a program inviting legislators and the public to attend open houses at their local districts. The purpose of this program is to highlight the issues impacting mosquito control and familiarize lawmakers with the effectiveness of California's nationally-recognized integrated vector control programs. Some districts are making arrangements to meet with legislators at the lawmakers' local or Sacramento offices.

Mosquito control programs have been extremely effective at reducing the incidence of mosquito-transmitted disease for more than 60 years. However, several regulatory issues threaten these programs and may have direct and lasting consequences to both public health and quality of life in California.

Decreased revenues and state 'borrowing' will reduce critical disease surveillance and mosquito control resources for most California agencies. More importantly, recent legal precedence will likely prohibit any adult mosquito control in the state until a new permitting process is developed, which will leave California residents without critical safeguards as the West Nile virus season begins.

President of the Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California, John Rusmisl, is concerned about the impact of these regulatory issues on Californians.

"Mosquito control agencies expect to be impacted by the economic downturn along with everyone else, but we worry about the implications," President Rusmisl said. "Without a legal way to manage epidemic disease transmission by mosquitoes, this year we are facing a situation where the public will be at high risk for West Nile virus."

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The reality of new and emerging diseases means that our public health programs must remain a priority in our global economy. In an effort to protect residents from these diseases, legislators need to fight to ensure that mosquito and vector control districts receive necessary public health exemptions.

Legislators, the media, and the public are invited to contact their local district for details. Visit www.mvcac.org or call 916-440-0826 for a list of member districts.

The Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California strives to provide quality public information, comprehensive mosquito and vector-borne disease surveillance, training to high professional standards, and effective legislative advocacy on behalf of California mosquito and vector control districts.

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For further information, contact: Catherine Smith: 916-440-0826
e-mail: casmith@mvcac.org

DO YOUR PART TO FIGHT THE BITE OF MOSQUITOES

By

Catherine Smith

Executive Director, Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California

Mosquito control in California has been very successful at preventing major outbreaks of diseases for more than 60 years. These diseases, which include malaria, encephalitis and West Nile virus, have been effectively prevented because of the proactive measures performed by local special districts to reduce mosquito populations. However, a combination of economic adversity, regulatory changes and legal challenges will have a significant impact on the quality of life California citizens have become accustomed to, in terms of mosquito control. These challenges and roadblocks will require all of us to take personal responsibility to protect public health.

Most Californians have been faced with the reality of an economic downturn, which has negatively affected our lifestyle. The banking industry crisis, the economic downturn and subsequent job loss have all contributed to the tremendous amount of home foreclosures, which makes effective mosquito control doubly challenging.

The housing market pinch directly affects property values, resulting in a drop in property taxes, which funds much of the mosquito control in California. In addition, foreclosed homes often remain unoccupied for weeks—resulting in more potential sources of mosquito production on neglected properties. Unkempt yards with containers holding winter rainwater, damaged or unattended irrigation systems and neglected backyard swimming pools all create conditions that produce literally millions of mosquitoes—putting public health at great risk.

While local government is generally not supported by state revenues, the state is permitted to ‘borrow’ local property tax dollars. The state will likely borrow revenues from local government because of the recent defeat of the state budget ballot measures. This borrow could mean a loss of 8 percent of property tax dollars to all local government, including mosquito control. While mosquito control agencies certainly recognize that the state is facing a fiscal hardship, the public needs to know the ramifications of such a cut, coupled with the current foreclosure environment.

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Mosquito and vector control agencies are also facing the challenges of a recent federal court ruling that will likely jeopardize effective mosquito control. The court ruling, which was based on restrictions from the Clean Water Act, will prevent use of a bacterium used by vector control agencies. This bacterium has been used for more than 30 years to effectively control mosquitoes in water.

If this ruling stands, it will likely increase the risk of West Nile virus (WNV) transmission among Californians because of the limitations on vector control agencies. WNV transmission resulted in 15 deaths in California and sickened more than 438 others in 2008, which proves the necessity of effective vector control. The court ruling limits resources and imposes enormous costs on vector control agencies—putting public safety at unnecessary risk, with minimal environmental benefit.

Mosquito control agencies believe that local tax dollars should be spent on the intended use—to protect the public from biting insects, reduce the potential for disease transmission and improve the quality of life. Mosquito control districts recognize the stewardship involved in protecting the environment and balancing the needs of the humans that live in it. Local mosquito districts apply pesticides using the most effective technologies and methodologies. Both larviciding and adulticiding are essential in order to provide the best possible control of nuisance and disease-carrying mosquitoes.

The public needs to be aware of and take personal responsibility to practice the Seven D's of mosquito prevention:

1. Drain standing water around your home.
2. Avoid Dawn, when mosquitoes are active.
3. Avoid Dusk, when mosquitoes are active.
4. Dress appropriately by wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outside.
5. Defend yourself with an effective mosquito repellent. Be sure to follow label instructions.
6. Door and window screens should be in working condition to prevent mosquitoes from entering your home.
7. Call you local District for any further help.

These next few years will surely present challenges for effective mosquito control. It is more important now than ever to work together to fight the bite of mosquitoes.

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May 28, 2009

FACT SHEET

- The Seven D's of mosquito prevention are precautionary steps directing residents to take personal responsibility around their homes to lessen the susceptibility of mosquito production.
- The tremendous amount of home foreclosures in California has been an added challenge for effective mosquito control. Foreclosed homes often remain unoccupied for weeks—resulting in more potential sources of mosquito production on unkempt properties. Neglected backyard swimming pools can produce millions of mosquitoes.
- The housing market crisis has directly affected property values, resulting in a drop in property taxes. Property taxes are used to fund much of the mosquito control in California.
- The state will likely borrow revenues from local government because of the recent failing state budget ballot measures. This borrow could mean a loss of 8 percent of property tax dollars to mosquito control.
- West Nile virus transmission resulted in 15 deaths in California and sickened more than 428 others in 2008.
- Mosquito control in California has been very successful at preventing major outbreaks of diseases for more than 60 years. These diseases include malaria, encephalitis and West Nile virus.
- The court ruling, which was based on restrictions from the Clean Water Act, will prevent use of a bacterium used by vector control agencies. This bacterium has been used for more than 30 years to effectively control mosquitoes in water. (*National Cotton Council of America, et al. v. United States Environmental Protection Agency – 6th Cir. Jan. 7, 2009*)
- The court ruling limits resources and imposes enormous costs on vector control agencies—putting public safety at unnecessary risk, with minimal environmental benefit.
- More than 60 mosquito and vector control districts throughout the state are members of MVCAC.
- MVCAC strives to provide quality public information, comprehensive mosquito and vector-borne disease surveillance, training to high professional standards, and effective legislative advocacy on behalf of California mosquito and vector control districts.