

Mosquito and Vector Control CSA 53

General Program Statement Fiscal Year 2008-09



Formation / Purpose

The Santa Cruz County Mosquito and Vector Control CSA 53 (“DISTRICT”) was established by Board resolution in 1993 through CA Government Code (25210) in response to many years of public demand for relief from pestiferous mosquitoes. The City of Watsonville elected to annex at that time. The important underlying purpose of the program is the protection of public health from mosquito and vector-borne diseases. It was formed as a Division within the County Agricultural Commissioner’s Office. The Agricultural Commissioner serves as the Director of the program.

The program’s primary function is mosquito surveillance and control following Integrated Pest Management practices incorporating public education, biological control, source reduction and least toxic pesticides that have minimal impact on people, wildlife, and the environment. Surveillance includes sampling immature mosquitoes in water bodies and monitoring populations of adult mosquitoes using traps. We focus treatments on the immature, aquatic stage of the mosquito because this approach is the most effective and environmentally sound.

In August 2005 property owners approved the North County Mosquito and Disease Control Assessment that expanded the program’s mosquito control operations from the original two “zones of benefit” (which lie within the Aptos and Pajaro Supervisorial Districts) to the entire County, following city-supported annexations of Capitola, Santa Cruz and Scotts Valley, increasing the area served from approx. 70 sq. mi to 445 sq mi.

Abatement powers are authorized within County Code (Chapter 1.14) and the California Health and Safety Code (Division 3, Chapter 1, Section 2000 *et seq.*). The program puts response to resident requests before all other activities.

Funding

The DISTRICT first operated with revenues generated by a flat service charge on the property tax bill. In 1996 the charge was converted into an assessment to meet Prop 218 requirements. By 2003 this original assessment was inadequate to fund ongoing services and increased services necessary to respond to area growth and vector and disease challenges. In 2004 a ballot procedure was undertaken and South County property owners passed a Mosquito and Disease Control Benefit Assessment that for FY2007-08 adds \$201,173 to the \$275,720 received from the original assessment, for South County revenues totaling \$476,893, not including interest.

The North County benefit assessment approved in 2005 provides additional revenues of \$729,582 for 2007-08. For 2008-09 the two North and South benefit assessments can be increased by the Bay Area CPI, which is 3.3% but will be capped at 3%. The original South County assessment cannot be increased. Total revenues for 2008-09 are requested at \$1,234,397, not including interest.

Fees are based on a calculation of the proportion of service benefit received by a parcel and are categorized according to land use codes established by the County Assessor's Office. The three assessments must be approved each year by the elected governing board, the County Board of Supervisors, after a public hearing. Resources are budgeted for the North and South benefit areas proportional to the revenues received, and salary and service expenditures are applied accordingly.

Revenue Index 130320 is used for revenues from the two levies for the South County: the original 101805 "Mosquito Abatement and Vector Control" assessment and supplemental 101807 "Mosquito and Disease Control Assessment". Revenue Index 130321 is used for revenues from 101808, the "North County Mosquito and Disease Control Assessment". In 2008-09, revenues will be collected by Tax Rate Areas and the charges will be administered by the County.

Operations

The Assistant Vector Control Manager, a Senior Account Clerk and five Vector Control Specialists will staff the DISTRICT year-round, supplemented by a seasonal Agricultural Biologist Aide, with additional clerical and administrative support provided by the Agricultural Commissioner's Office. The DISTRICT is requesting a Biologist position in 2008-09 to assist with disease surveillance and enhance the professionalism of the program. The Assistant Vector Control Manager and permanent field staff are certified by the California Department of Health Services in mosquito and vector control and must complete 40 hours of continuing education every two years.

The DISTRICT is an active member of the Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California and participates regularly in meetings of mosquito and vector control regional associations. Staff attends training programs and incorporates the latest information on vector control and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) methods and materials to the DISTRICT's program.

A thorough environmental review with negative declaration was completed early in 2005, as part of the procedure for annexing additional areas of the county into the mosquito control program.

A community forum or open house will be held in 2008 to solicit input from the public to enhance responsiveness. To better fulfill our public health pest control role and meet safety requirements, in 2008-09 the DISTRICT is requesting additional office, laboratory, mosquitofish rearing and shop facilities, and a shower/locker room.

Staff routinely uses trucks equipped with spray equipment, an amphibious ATV and a boat to perform a variety of treatment and control measures. The DISTRICT contracts with a helicopter service on an as-needed basis where applications of larvicides must be made over large areas. The most extensive mosquito source within the DISTRICT is the 600-acre Watsonville Slough complex. Aerial larvacide treatments are combined with ground based spraying in response to requests for service from the public.

Changing climate and proliferating breeding sites are challenging vector programs nationwide to protect humans, pets, and wildlife from emerging and re-emerging vector-borne diseases such as West Nile virus. DISTRICT personnel conduct mosquito-borne virus surveillance by submitting chicken blood samples, dead wild birds and live mosquitoes collected in traps to State and UC virus laboratories. The DISTRICT cooperates closely with Federal, State and local health, regulatory and environmental agencies and the University of California, and has a cooperative agreement with the California Department of Health Services.

The Mosquito and Vector Control program also disseminates information on a wide range of vector-related topics, such as yellowjackets, flies, ticks, spiders, and rats, and provides mosquito-eating fish for yard sources when appropriate. A community education program contributes to residents controlling mosquito and rodent problems on their own property, and informs them of vector-transmitted diseases. DISTRICT staff assists State and university researchers in Lyme Disease surveillance and will also play a key role in responding to Africanized Honey Bees, if they were to arrive in the county.

For 2008-09 the DISTRICT will conduct mosquito surveillance for monitoring West Nile virus and encephalitis viruses and continue monitoring for the imported Asian Tiger mosquito. There will also be additional monitoring for other diseases transmitted by rodents and ticks, and rodent and stinging insect control in public areas.

Community health, comfort and prosperity are promoted by effective and continuous mosquito abatement measures. The DISTRICT improves habitability, productivity, property values and outdoor enjoyment while protecting public health.