

CITY OF BLYTHE

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September 14, 2006

Evelyn L. MacConnell, Foreperson
2005-06 Riverside County Grand Jury
P.O. Box 829
Riverside, CA 92502

Re: City of Blythe Response to the 2005-06 Grand Jury Report
on Riverside County Mosquito and Vector Control Services

Dear Ms. MacConnell:

This letter is written and submitted as the City of Blythe's formal response to the Grand Jury Report on Mesquito and Vector Control Services, dated June 28, 2006:

Grand Jury Recommendation No. 1

Conduct a study of vector control effectiveness throughout the area covered by the five agencies. Based upon study results, consider the benefit to the County of dividing all vector control responsibilities between the two Special Districts (Northwest and Coachella Valley).

Response

Per our understanding of the recommendation, Blythe staff has initiated a discussion with the other 4 entities providing vector control in Riverside County. Each indicated there is presently a movement underway dealing with consolidation of vector control services being spearheaded by LAFCO. Our understanding is that LAFCO's work (regarding vector control) will take about 3-6 months, and that efforts to consolidate and fund the consolidation would be put before the Board of Supervisors, and ultimately be placed on the ballot (timeframe uncertain) for voter consideration relative to funding the service. With voter approval for funding, the City of Blythe staff would support getting out of the vector control business.

Grand Jury Recommendation No. 2

Conduct a survey and/or prepare a ballot measure for voters outside the present Special Districts to determine their willingness to support the additional cost for Special District coverage.

Response

As indicated above, the feasibility issue of consolidating vector control services is working its way through LAFCO, which may result in a plan going to the Board of Supervisors and eventually the electorate as a ballot measure for funding. At this point in time, our discussions with the other vector control entities indicate that each is waiting to see what the LAFCO report says, and that their direction relative to participation will be influenced by that report. As an aside, it is my understanding that in the LAFCO effort there was no response (maybe no qualified response) to LAFCO's first RFP for review of vector control service in Riverside County, and that LAFCO has since distributed a second RFP and that their one respondent is being evaluated in terms of their qualifications. Staff believes a ballot measure and consolidation of services will in large measure hinge on what the LAFCO report recommends.

Grand Jury Recommendation No. 3

If accepted by the voters, merge County Vector Control into the two Special Districts, or form a third Special District. Such a merger or expansion should offer any non-participating cities the option to contract with the appropriate Special District.

Response

As indicated in the Grand Jury Report, the City of Blythe had no reported incidents of West Nile Virus in the Palo Verde, and further, there has been about a 50% reduction in reported calls-for-service received by the City in the last year. The reduction in calls-for-service is in staff's opinion related to purchases of new vector equipment in FY 05-06. Notwithstanding the City's modest success with vector control, the City of Blythe would certainly consider consolidation of our program into a larger program, especially if the voters would agree to financially support such an endeavor.

In conclusion, this response is intended to satisfy the requirements of Penal Code Section 933. If there is further explanation required, please feel free to contract me at your convenience.

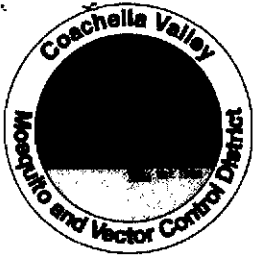
Sincerely



Les Nelson
City Manager

LN:vr

cc: Mayor and City Council
Supervisor Roy Wilson, County of Riverside 4th District
Public Works Director Jim Rodkey



Coachella Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District

43-420 Trader Place • Indio, CA 92201 • (760) 342-8287 • Fax (760) 342-8110
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September 13, 2006

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General Manager

Ms. Evelyn L. MacConnell, Foreperson
2005-06 Riverside County Grand Jury
PO Box 829
Riverside, CA 92502

Dear Ms. MacConnell:

We are in receipt of your Grand Jury report dated June 28, 2006 and scheduled for public release on June 30, 2006. It is obvious that a great deal of time and effort went into this evaluation and we sincerely appreciate your thorough assessment of the issue.

As this report includes an overview of the District's basic parameters, we wish to draw to your attention a few inaccuracies. Incorporating these corrections into the final report will ensure the report is a true and accurate reflection of our organization. To that end, please take notice of and incorporate the following changes into the Background portion of the report:

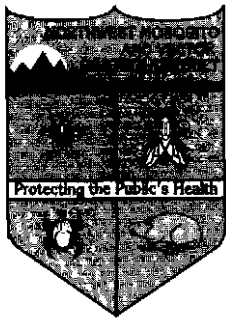
- The operating budget for the Coachella Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District (CVMVCD) was previously established at \$2,400,000. It has since increased to \$8,400,000 due to the passage of a benefit assessment which brought back the Red Imported Fire Ant program and enhanced our vector control operations;
- The CVMVCD's full-time staff is currently 45, not 20;
- The areas covered by CVMVCD include those listed (Desert Hot Springs, Rancho Mirage, Indian Wells, Palm Springs, Palm Desert, and Indio), but also includes the cities of La Quinta, Cathedral City, and Coachella.

The Grand Jury's report serves to validate our efforts to provide a safer environment for our residents and visitors by reducing the risk of disease transmission from mosquitoes and other vectors.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald E. Goms", is written over a horizontal line.

Donald E. Goms
General Manager



NORTHWEST MOSQUITO AND VECTOR CONTROL DISTRICT

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Trustee
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County of Riverside

Major S. Dhillon, Ph.D.
District Manager

September 12, 2006

Ms. Evelyn L. MacConnell, Foreperson
2005-06 Riverside County Grand Jury
P. O. Box 829
Riverside, California 92502

Dear Ms. MacConnell:

Enclosed herewith is the response to Grand Jury's findings and recommendations. Thank you for your visit and the recommendations.

Sincerely,

Thomas Buckley, President
Board of Trustees

MSD:rem
Enclosure

Northwest Mosquito and Vector Control District
Response to Finding and Recommendation by
The Grand Jury of Riverside County 2006

Findings:

Finding No. 1: West Nile Virus cases for Riverside County, as of November 2005, are shown on the attached chart. Seventy-one percent of West Nile Virus cases were reported from the areas covered by the County Vector Control Division of the Environmental Health Department.

Response: The District completely agrees with Finding No. 1. It is a known fact that well-organized programs provide much superior services in the most efficient and economical way. Our District takes pride in protecting the public health. Due to high professional standards, very few West Nile virus cases were recorded in the jurisdiction of the District in 2004 or 2005 and none in 2006 thus far. However, September and October are critical months for West Nile infection.

Finding No 2: Complaints about mosquitoes between the Coachella Valley District and the City of Blythe are received by the Blythe office and submitted weekly to County Vector Control. The County then schedules control visits base upon the weekly reports and sends personnel and equipment, incurring costs for overnight stays and extensive mileage.

Response: This finding does not address any issue with our District. However, a professional mosquito control program cannot be provided on a part-time basis.

Finding No. 3: With five agencies, separate areas of responsibility and unclear geographic boundaries, the public is often confused about whom to call for assistance or to report vector activity.

Response: The District fully agrees with this finding. At times the residents are caught in the run-around of which agency is supposed to provide these services.

Recommendations:

Recommendation No. 1: Conduct a study of vector control effectiveness throughout the areas covered by the five agencies. Based upon study results, consider the benefit to the County of dividing all vector control responsibilities between the two Special Districts (Northwest and Coachella Valley).

Response: This is the second Grand Jury report (first Grand Jury Report – 1994) that has recommended that vector control services be provided by the two Districts. The District fully concurs with this recommendation. In California, there are approximately 50 organized mosquito and vector control agencies. It is a known fact that in the state of California organized Mosquito and Vector Control Districts provide far superior and professional services. Due to their effective services, most of the counties have chosen to give vector control responsibility to Mosquito and Vector Control Districts. It is significantly more economical and effective to provide vector control on an area-wide basis. This concept has been supported by the previous county health officers (Dr. Gallagher and Dr. Brad Gilbert), Director of Environmental Health (Mr. John Fanning), State Health Department (Mr. Charles Myers), etc. Currently, LAFCO is in the process of conducting their study on this issue.

Recommendation No. 2: Conduct a survey and/or prepare a ballot measure for voters outside the present Special Districts to determine their willingness to support the additional cost for Special District coverage.

Response: This recommendation will need an in-depth, detailed study. Nevertheless, it needs not to be implemented as stated in the above recommendation. However, if Recommendation No. 1 is accepted by the two Districts and the Board of Supervisors, this recommendation will be implemented pursuant to Proposition 218.

Recommendation No. 3: If accepted by the voters, merge County Vector Control into the two Special District, or form a third Special District. Such a merger or expansion should offer any non-participating cities the option to contract with the appropriate Special District.

Response: It is our professional opinion based on several experts in the field, that there is absolutely no need to set up a third District as it contradicts Recommendation No. 1.

The District was formed in 1959 and since then has significantly expanded its service jurisdiction. The District Manager, Dr. M.S. Dhillon, serves on various Boards and Committees of state, national and international associations. Recently, he was appointed to World Health Organization expert panel on public health pesticides. In accord with other experts, it is his professional opinion that the vector control services be provided by the two existing Districts. This will allow the Districts to implement vector control strategies in the most efficient way to safeguard the health and safety of their constituents.

Finally, the District appreciates the findings and recommendations made by the Grand Jury.