



**Greater Los Angeles County
Vector Control District**
12545 Florence Ave.
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670
(562) 944-9656

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

March 11, 2005

Contact: Stephanie Heintz
Public Information Officer
(562) 944-6789
(562) 244-2648 cell
E-mail: smiladin@glacvcd.org

South El Monte Mayor Urges Residents to Prevent West Nile Virus

Newly appointed Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District (GLACVCD) Board of Trustee Mayor Blanca Figueroa from the city of South El Monte is advising her residents to prepare for the upcoming West Nile virus (WNV) season, which is predicted to be possibly worse than last year.

At the Thursday, March 10th GLACVCD board meeting, District Manager Jack Hazelrigg made the recommendation to augment the Underground Storm Drain Program (USDP), by adding an additional three staff members to the team. This recommendation was made to the Board because the Southern house mosquito is the primary WNV vector and predominately breeds in these systems. The District has over 8,000 miles of underground storm drain systems snaking below city streets, and the current staff of 10 full-time specialists need the additional help. In 2004, the USDP crew inspected 4,000 miles and treated over 176 miles of undergrounds. The additional staff would make it possible to survey the remaining 4,000 miles and increase needed treatments. Jack Hazelrigg stated to the board, "We need to hit mosquitoes now, quick, and hard, if we are going to be successful in combating WNV this year." The board approved hiring three additional staff members.

Another major concern is backyard sources, since the Southern house mosquito is notorious for breeding in containers such as cans, buckets, jars, and even out-of-order swimming pools. The mosquito season has been jump-started because of the near-record rainfall, which has settled into unsuspecting backyard mosquito breeding sources, thus increasing the likelihood of mosquito emergence and risk of the potentially serious West Nile Virus (WNV). "We can't stress enough how important it is for property owners to inspect their own backyards and dump and drain standing water," says Hazelrigg. The mosquito season usually starts in April, and this year the District discovered breeding as early as February.

Last year, South El Monte was a "hot spot" for WNV activity. The city is surrounded by the Rio Hondo and San Gabriel rivers, along with the Whittier Narrows Nature Preserve/Dam area, which are convergence zones for WNV activity because of the amplified mosquito-bird

-More-

News Fax / P. 2

interaction in these wetland habitats. “We don’t want South El Monte to be a hot bed of WNV activity this year, and this is why its important we take proactive measures now,” states Hazelrigg. Mayor Figueroa commends the District for taking swift action and encourages residents to do the same.

West Nile virus spreads when mosquitoes bite infected birds and consequently transmit the virus to humans and animals. The virus is not contagious or spread by person-to-person contact. Two WNV positive crows were discovered in the San Fernando Valley in early February, and no other indication of virus transmission has been determined within the District at this time.

Residents can protect themselves and their family by playing an active role in mosquito prevention by doing the following:

- Eliminate standing water on your property by dumping or draining water in neglected swimming pools, spas, ponds, clogged rain gutters, rain barrels, discarded tires, buckets, holes in trees, watering troughs, leaking garden equipment, water gardens, or anything holding water for more than a week. Change the water in pet dishes and replace the water in birdbaths weekly. Keep child wading pools empty and on their sides when they are not being used. This will stop the mosquito life cycle.
- Wear long sleeve shirts and pants outdoors, especially at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- Use mosquito repellent containing DEET or Picaridin
- Keep tight fitting screens on doors and windows to prevent mosquitoes from entering homes.

For further assistance, call the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District at (562) 944-9656 or visit: www.glacvcd.org