The Mosquito, Vector & Disease Control Measure

The County of Riverside Vector Control Program is a local government program that was formed originally in 1972 to control mosquitoes and other vectors, and protect residents from the diseases they carry. The Program is the sole provider of mosquito and vector control services for your property, and nearby habitats that may generate mosquitoes.

The Program no longer receives general property tax dollars. In response to this loss of funding, the Program has made budget cuts, staff reductions, and only receives a limited portion of discretionary funds from the County.

The Program has been stretching its funding to continue providing mosquito, vector and disease control services despite cost increases associated with controlling West Nile virus, and the need for increased surveillance for invasive species, such as Yellow Fever mosquito and Asian Tiger mosquito. However, without a stable and adequate revenue source, the future operation of this program is in significant jeopardy.

In late May 2015, property owners will receive a mailed ballot that will allow them to decide if comprehensive, year-round mosquito control and vector-borne disease prevention services should continue at their current levels, or possibly cease operation.

Environmentally Sound Services

Mosquitoes are controlled using environmentally sound methods that focus on finding the sources of mosquito breeding (usually stagnant, standing water), and eliminating immature mosquitoes (larvae) before they emerge as adults and begin biting people and animals.

Why Is This Measure Needed?

The assessment ballot will allow property owners in unincorporated Riverside County to decide whether to pass a proposed annual benefit assessment to provide funding for comprehensive, year-round mosquito, vector, and disease control services. Increased threats from new species like the Asian Tiger mosquito, and emerging diseases such as Chikungunya, and Dengue and Yellow fevers, require additional levels of protection. Mosquito species capable of transmitting these diseases have already become established in some Southern California counties.

If the assessment is approved, the Program will continue control of mosquitoes, consult on other vectors, provide identification, and rapid testing for existing and emerging vectors and diseases in Riverside County.

However, if this proposed assessment is not approved, financial realities may dictate that the Program cease operation.

How Does the Program Test for Diseases?

To test for diseases such as West Nile virus, encephalitis, and other diseases, the Program uses surveillance approaches including mosquito and insect traps. They require significant resources to operate because they must be set in the evening or during the day, and must be examined the following morning or afternoon. Insects collected are taken to the laboratory, counted, identified and – if needed - tested for disease.
How Do I Know the Funds Will Be Used Wisely and for Their Intended Purpose?
The Measure includes several layers of accountability to ensure that all funds are expended properly on mosquito, vector and disease control:

- Funds can only be spent on mosquito, vector and disease control services in the Program service area.
- The budget for the services proposed each year will be presented to the public annually, including a professional audit.
- The budget and services will be overseen by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors.

What Are the Specifics of the Measure?
The measure would provide funding for the following:

**Mosquito Control** - Continued year-round control, using environmentally sound methods, of mosquito sources before immature mosquitoes (larvae) emerge as adults and begin biting people and animals.

- Mosquito-eating fish would continue to be provided to the public free of charge.
- Certified technicians would identify additional mosquito breeding sources and locations, and prevent adult mosquitoes from emerging.

**West Nile Virus & Other Vector-Borne Disease Prevention** - Continued surveillance and disease testing for West Nile virus. Increased surveillance of other types of vectors and vector-borne disease to assess the health risk and establish an appropriate response to emerging disease outbreaks.

- Mosquito traps set throughout the Riverside County Program area to provide early warning of potential disease outbreaks.
- Resume testing of dead birds for the presence of West Nile virus and other diseases.
- Surveillance and testing of rodents and the diseases they carry such as hantavirus and plague would be continued.

**Response to Service Requests** - The Program would continue to respond to requests for service from property owners and residents. Program responses to service requests are free of charge and quickly address mosquito and other vector problems.

- Testing and monitoring for diseases carried by mosquitoes, such as encephalitis, and West Nile virus.
- Surveillance and testing of rodents and ticks and the diseases they carry such as Hantavirus, Plague, and Lyme disease.

**Community Education** - Continued education of the general public and in schools about protecting themselves and their pets from diseases carried by mosquitoes and other insects, and prevention of mosquito breeding in backyard locations.

- Public education provides awareness and information about vectors, the diseases they carry, and how people can protect themselves.
- The Program would continue distributing brochures, media releases, newspaper articles, group presentations, information on the internet, and at community events.

What are the Proposed Rates?
Single family residential properties on one acre or less would contribute approximately $7 per year, while other residential property types would be assessed according to the number of dwelling units and parcel size. Commercial, industrial, and agriculture properties would be assessed according to their parcel size.

Additional Information
For additional information on the Mosquito, Vector and Disease Control Measure, please contact the County of Riverside Vector Control Program at (951) 766-9454 or visit our website at www.rivcoeh.org/Programs/vector.

Look for your ballot in your mail box in late May 2015