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September 7, 2010

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H. Jonathan E. Fielding MD
Director and Health Officer

SUBJECT: **WEST NILE VIRUS**

This is in response to the July 20, 2010 motion by Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, directing the Department of Public Health (DPH), in conjunction with the Department of Public Works (DPW), to: 1), support local Vector Control organizations to investigate and clear open water ways that harbor mosquito breeding; 2) fully implement the planned West Nile virus awareness and surveillance program by working cooperatively with the Mosquito Vector Control Districts, the State, and the Centers for Disease Control; and 3) work with local Vector Control districts to add coverage in the unincorporated areas.

On August 12, 2010, the West Nile Virus Interagency Task Force of Los Angeles County met to discuss new developments related to the current West Nile virus season and to discuss Supervisor Antonovich's motion. The Task Force consists of representatives from DPH, DPW, all the Mosquito and Vector Control Districts, and State/local agencies dedicated to mosquito control and abatement. Below are the responses to each item in the motion.

Item #1: Clearing Of Open Water Ways To Prevent Mosquito Breeding

DPW and the Greater Los Angeles County Mosquito and Vector Control District have developed a plan to minimize potential mosquito development and problematic flood control channels prior to the initiation of the mosquito breeding season. The plan calls for the effective management of vegetation and debris within the channels each fall in preparation for the spring mosquito season. Timing is crucial to the success of the plan and necessary to comply with California Department of Fish and Game requirements that specify retention of suitable riparian habitat for nesting birds during the summer breeding season. The pre-season reduction of vegetation has proven to be a successful approach, and both agencies now actively implement these seasonal guidelines.

As a means of enhancing this successful endeavor, underground channels are now included in the dialogue between the two agencies. DPW is currently working on a web-based GIS mapping project that will delineate all underground storm drains and channels and identify the responsible agency. DPW expects this to be available in the near future.

Item #2: Cooperative Efforts To Implement The Planned West Nile Virus Awareness And Surveillance Program

Outreach efforts in schools and at community events are ongoing. However, the Mosquito and Vector Control Districts have deferred from the costly television and print media ads that tend to produce message saturation, to announcements directed to targeted groups. When surveillance indicates positive birds or mosquitoes within a specific area are transmitting the virus, targeted outreach is conducted by way of community presentations, informational releases, and direct phone calls to city parks, and recreation staff of other departments. Bus advertisements are also being used this year to alert passengers and remind residents to use mosquito repellent and practice preventive measures. Media releases are distributed in response to specific West Nile virus activity to remind the public of the potential risks associated with mosquitoes. In addition, the Districts will continue to cooperatively purchase radio public service announcement airtime throughout the spring and summer of the mosquito season.

DPH continues to work cooperatively with the local mosquito and vector control districts, the public health departments of Long Beach, Pasadena, and Vernon, and DPW in taking preventive measures to effectively manage mosquitoes and their potential breeding sites. DPH will continue to participate in the West Nile Virus Interagency Task Force and attend the next meeting scheduled for June 2011.

Item #3: Coverage for Unincorporated Areas

Providing mosquito control services in unincorporated areas continues to be a major concern of the Task Force. The service agreement between DPH and the Antelope Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District for complaint coverage in the unincorporated areas of Agua Dulce, Acton, Lake Elizabeth, Lake Hughes, Leona Valley, Littlerock, Lake Los Angeles, and Pearblossom has again been negotiated and approved.

The city of Baldwin Park has decided not to place an initiative on the ballot to establish mosquito control services due to the additional financial burden that would be incurred on residents and therefore will continue to contract with the San Gabriel Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District to provide coverage during the summer season. The City of La Canada-Flintridge has similar concerns and will continue to contract with the Greater Los Angeles County Mosquito and Vector Control District for coverage on a seasonal basis.

We will provide you with a report in July 2011 after the next Task Force meeting. In the meantime, if you have any questions or need additional information, please let me know.

JEF:tp
PH:1007:008

c: Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Director of Public Works
Managers, Mosquito and Vector Control Districts