

ELECTORAL AREA SERVICES COMMITTEE
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT INFORMATION REPORT

INFORMATION REPORT #ESP 09-26
01 APRIL 2009

SUBJECT WEST NILE VIRUS UPDATE 2009

BACKGROUND

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a virus transmitted to humans by a few species of mosquito that become carriers from feeding on infected birds. The virus can cause West Nile fever (symptoms include fever, headache, body ache and rash) and occasionally West Nile neurological syndrome (symptoms include high fever, convulsions, neurological problems and, in very rare cases, death). Currently, no cases of WNV have been reported in British Columbia and the number of mosquitoes able to transmit the disease to humans is low in the Capital Regional District (CRD).

In 2004, the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) established a technical working group to collect information that would be needed if WNV was found in the region. The group comprises representatives from VIHA, the municipalities and the CRD Stormwater, Harbours and Watersheds program (SHWP), (representing the electoral areas).

SHWP provides services to the electoral areas by participating in the VIHA group, coordinating work related to WNV planning and monitoring, and reports to the Electoral Area Services committee twice a year (before and after the mosquito season) to provide an update on mosquito monitoring, status of WNV in the electoral areas and other related items.

DISCUSSION

Each year, the CRD contracts D.G. Regan and Associates to conduct mosquito habitat surveys. The surveys provide information on mosquito distributions in the electoral areas, track changes in population and provide essential data in the event that a response to WNV is required. In 2008, D.G. Regan and Associates assisted with preparation of an emergency response manual and outreach material. The emergency response manual is to be used in the event that WNV is discovered in the CRD. A draft of this manual is currently being completed and will be sent to the electoral area directors for review before the end of April. Outreach material will be put on the CRD website before the 2009 mosquito season.


In 2008, mosquito habitat surveys were conducted in high risk areas, which are those with previously identified mosquito populations and close to populated areas. No mosquitoes likely to vector the disease (*Culex*) were found in the Juan de Fuca electoral area. A small number of *Culex* larvae were found in the Salt Spring Island and Southern Gulf Islands electoral areas. Most were identified in surface water sites and some were found in catch basins. Staff will educate area residents as necessary. These findings are consistent with past years and there is no plan to implement any mosquito control measures at this time.

In 2008, there were no cases of WNV in British Columbia. As in past years, WNV was found in neighbouring areas. Of the 14 positive human cases in Canada, there was a single occurrence in Alberta. In Washington State, there were two possible cases of WNV and there were 12 cases in Idaho.

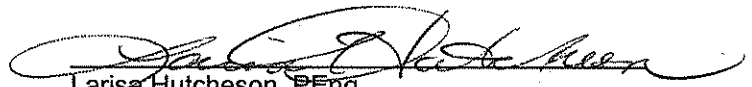
The WNV project is funded by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). With some potential disease vector mosquitoes being found in the region and WNV being found in the areas bordering British Columbia, SHWP will continue to use UBCM funds to conduct mosquito surveys in high-risk areas on behalf of the electoral areas. In 2008, UBCM contributed \$14,450 toward this work and each electoral area provided budget for staff administration of the project (Salt Spring Island \$1000; Juan de Fuca \$600; Southern Gulf Islands \$600). Staff have submitted an application for 2009 funding in the amount of \$10,837. This is less than in previous years because UBCM has changed the grant structure to set aside funds for larvacide application, which the CRD does not perform under this program.

SUMMARY

The CRD SHWP undertakes work related to WNV for the electoral areas. This includes habitat and mosquito surveys, emergency response planning and preparation of outreach materials. The surveys are done to acquire necessary information on mosquito distributions in the electoral areas, in case a response to WNV is required. A draft emergency response manual will be sent to electoral area directors before the end of April. WNV infections continue to occur in areas surrounding British Columbia and small numbers of potential disease vector mosquitoes were found in the CRD. In 2009, SHWP will use UBCM funds to continue monitoring high-risk areas on behalf of the electoral areas.



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COMMENTS

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