

## **Update from the West Marin Mosquito Control Coordinating Council – May 2008**

On behalf of the West Marin Mosquito Control Coordinating Council (WMMCCC), we want to update you on our ongoing work with the Sonoma/Marin Mosquito and Vector Control District (hereafter referred to as “the District”).

**First - who are we?** The WMMCCC consists of representatives from West Marin communities, government agencies and non-profit organizations who have been working with the District in developing and sustaining a non-toxic approach to controlling mosquitoes in West Marin (see membership listed at the end of this article).

**A brief history:** West Marin was annexed into the District in November 2004. Based on information provided in pre-election materials, many who voted for the annexation believed that the District would only use “environmentally safe” products in West Marin. Shortly after the annexation, research on the products that the District could legally use found many of them have the potential to be toxic and some have adverse impacts on human health and/or the environment.

In December 2004, Barry and Katharina Smith brought the issue to the community’s attention and the item was subsequently placed on the BCPUD’s public agenda. Over 100 people from West Marin communities attended the January 2005 BCPUD meeting. One by one, citizens explained that West Marin is a unique community with many organic farms, waterways, parks, wildlife and some endangered species. Scientific papers documenting the toxicity of certain chemicals were presented. Many people articulated their concerns regarding the use of chemicals other than those approved by the Organic Materials Research Institute (OMRI).

**The Committee of Five:** At the end of the discussion, the District agreed to meet with a committee developed by BCPUD to work out an agreement. The original BCPUD Mosquito Control Committee (hereafter referred to as “The Committee of Five”) was comprised of 5 members and 5 alternates. BCPUD asked the committee to develop a non-toxic approach to controlling mosquitoes in West Marin. The original committee consisted of Liza Goldblatt, Chair (Pt. Reyes), Bobbi Kimball (representing BCPUD, Bolinas), Barry Smith (Pt Reyes), Helge Hellberg (representing Marin Organic, Pt Reyes) and Russ Faure-Brac (Dogtown). The alternates were Vic Amoroso, Eleanor Lyman, Alethea Patton, Penny Vandyke and Warren Weber – all from Bolinas. Members of the Committee of Five contacted government agency and non-profit organizations in West Marin, Marin and beyond and received 25 letters of support as a result.

Many thanks are due to citizens throughout West Marin who contributed to a strong and broad based community effort. West Marin citizens attended several District board meetings in Santa Rosa to respectfully convey the wishes of their communities. Also, Supervisor Steve Kinsey and his able staff – David Escobar and Lisa Crosse - assisted the “Committee of Five” and the District when negotiations slowed. Katharina Smith was appointed as the first West Marin representative to the District Board; Fred Smith (EAC) currently holds that seat on the District Board.

**The first West Marin agreement:** The “Committee of Five” negotiated with the District for more than a year and reached a one-year agreement in April 2006. The initial agreement defined that the District would work in partnership with the West Marin communities on education about mosquito prevention and control; provide information and support for physical prevention methods, assist West Marin communities with drainage and other standing water issues and - only as a last resort - use *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. israelensis (Bt) or *Bacillus sphaericus* (Bs) to kill mosquito larvae. These are both bacteria that are naturally found in our environment, have few impacts to natural ecosystems, and are OMRI approved.

**Developing a working partnership:** While tensions were initially high, over time there has been a great deal of cross-education and collaboration. The District faithfully attended Committee of Five meetings and committee members visited the District office in Cotati. By taking the time to talk about chemicals, organic farms, waterways and environmental impacts, mutual respect was cultivated and a cordial and a solid working relationship has developed. The District has been very helpful to West Marin over these last few years. District representatives have worked with Bolinas in improving the drainage ditches around their sewer ponds and the District has worked with many citizens in addressing their mosquito problems. The District provides ongoing mosquito surveillance activity throughout West Marin.

**The new West Marin Council:** After the first agreement was signed between BCPUD (on behalf of West Marin) and the District in April 2006, the BCPUD Board asked the Committee of Five to develop a separate West Marin council that would be comprised of individuals from a broad coalition of West Marin communities, government agencies and non-profit organizations. In 2006, the West Marin Mosquito Control Coordinating Council (WMMCCC) was formed (see membership listed at the end of this article). The WMMCCC meets regularly to share information, problems, solutions, coordinate communications and educational activities. In addition, the WMMCCC has requested both historical and current data on where there have been mosquito problems in West Marin and how they were solved (what techniques or chemicals were used, if any, to treat the problems). The District has provided this information in a timely manner.

**The second West Marin agreement:** In 2007, a second agreement was negotiated and in October 2007, the WMMCCC and the District entered into another one-year trial. The District had requested the use of Agnique MMF™ for septic systems with significant mosquito infestations. This would only occur in cases where septic systems were not properly sealed or screened and mosquito pupae or pre-adults were present in large numbers. Research on Agnique MMF™ found that the product, a monomolecular surface film, acts by suffocating immature mosquito and midges. Therefore, in the new agreement, the District may –with the property owner’s permission – use Agnique MMF™ in septic systems where mosquito pupae are present. Ideally, such use would only occur once, as the homeowner would be instructed on how to correct his/her septic system to resolve the mosquito problem. So, please properly seal and screen your septic systems!

The WMMCCC agreed that a one-year trial agreement is appropriate to monitor and evaluate the use of Agnique MMF™. Here is the wording of the agreement in terms of Agnique MMF™:

*“Agnique MMF may be used in septic tanks, small ornamental ponds, and animal waste ponds and connecting ditches where late mosquito instar larvae and pupae are present and control has not or cannot be achieved with Bt or Bs. It is understood that the landowner clearly has the right to approve/disapprove use of Agnique MMF on their property.*

*Homeowners will be instructed to properly seal and screen their septic tanks. Pond owners will be informed of the use of Bt or Bs products and where to obtain these products. Dairy owners will be encouraged to remove material from dairy waste ponds to avoid the use of Agnique MMF.*

*If property owners choose to allow use of Agnique MMF, they must wait 22 days following the application of Agnique MMF before materials can be removed from ornamental or dairy waste ponds. Agnique MMF will not be used on any organic farms or adjacent buffer zones as defined in the National Organic Standards, Part 205.*

*The only modification to the above agreed-upon procedure for the use of Agnique MMF is if the District believes that there is a significant problem with waste treatment facility areas. In these situations, the District will meet with relevant government agencies to request use of Agnique MMF in sewer ponds.*

*The MSMVCD and the WMMCCC agree to substitute Agnique MMF with a product documented to have fewer potential adverse environmental impacts as soon as such an alternative with similar effectiveness is registered in the state of California.”*

The full 2007 agreement, the original 2006 agreement and other relevant information is posted at [www.bcpud.org](http://www.bcpud.org)

We are very fortunate that no human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) has been reported in West Marin and we will continue to carefully monitor WNV trends with the District and state public health officials.

**What West Marin citizens can do:** For the West Marin agreement to work and demonstrate that a non-toxic approach can be successful, it is important for all West Marin residents to actively assist in the control of mosquitoes by eliminating potential mosquito habitat. This is why, as mosquito season approaches, ads will appear in local newspapers asking you to:

1. Screen roof plumbing vents and seal your septic tanks
2. Walk your property and dispose of any standing water once a week
3. Check your tarps or old tires for standing water
4. Monitor dairy waste ponds for mosquito problems
5. Drain watering holes on a regular basis
6. Clean your clogged gutters
7. Manage irrigation water effectively

8. Fill tree holes
9. Report mosquito breeding sites to the District and they will visit and evaluate the site with the property owner. Ideally, most mosquito problems can be solved mechanically (by digging ditches, etc.). If this is not possible then Bt or Bs may be recommended and applied.
10. Report dead birds or squirrels to 1-877-968-2473 (1-877-WNV-BIRD).

Please contact us for further information. A list of the WMMCCC current membership is included at the end of this article. While the council has expanded to include many new member organizations and communities, several original members remain involved to provide consistency and historical memory as we move forward.

Thank you so much!

**West Marin Mosquito Control Coordinating Council representatives:**

Liza Goldblatt, Point Reyes Station - WMMCCC Co-Chair

Natalie Gates, Point Reyes National Seashore – WMMCCC Co-Chair

Alice Beall, Marshall

Paola Bouley, SPAWN

David Boyd, California State Parks

Russ Faure-Brac, Dogtown

Kaaren Gann, Inverness/IPUD

Margaret Graham, Tomales/TVCS D

Helge Hellberg, Marin Organic

Bobbi Kimball, Bolinas/BCPUD – WMMCCC Secretary

Deborah Kamradt, Muir Beach/MBCSD

Mischon Martin, Marin County Open Space

Larry Norall, MMWD

Dennis Rodoni, Olema/NMWD

Scott Tye, Stinson Beach/SBCWD

**Council Liasons:**

Ed Schulze, MSMVCD Board Member - Marin County At Large

Fred Smith, MSMVCD Board Member - West Marin