

January 24, 2011

Ms. Terry Macaulay, Deputy Executive Director
Delta Stewardship Council
980 Ninth Street, Suite 1500
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: NOP for Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Delta Plan (dated December 9, 2010)

Dear Ms. Macaulay:

On behalf of the Delta-area mosquito and vector control districts (MVCDs), we appreciate the opportunity to submit the following comments in response to the Delta Stewardship Council's (DSC) Notice of Preparation (NOP) of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Delta Plan (the Plan). The MVCD's primary interest in the development of the Plan relates to: 1) the potential impacts to public health, and 2) the effects on public services.

A significant portion of the Plan is dedicated to the restoration of wetland ecosystems and the development of migratory bird habitat. If not properly designed, built, managed and maintained, these types of aquatic features provide for extensive mosquito-breeding habitat that requires response and resources from the MVCDs.

There are several mosquito-borne diseases that are detected in California, including the deadly West Nile virus (WNV). WNV was first detected in California in 2003, and has been routinely detected in mosquito, bird, and human populations within the Delta's five counties since 2004. Wild birds are the reservoir of WNV; mosquitoes receive the virus from wild birds and then transmit (vector) it to humans and wildlife. The primary vectors of WNV in California are two species of mosquitoes that lay their eggs in standing water such as wetlands and ponds. The eggs hatch into larvae and pupae (immature stages), which then develop into flying adults (adult stage). Adult mosquitoes can migrate several miles from their original breeding site in search of a blood meal and to reproduce.

To interrupt mosquito breeding cycles and WNV transmission, MVCDs can sometimes provide short-term control of immature and adult mosquitoes through applications of pesticides. For long-term control, MVCDs work with landowners and water managers to modify mosquito-breeding conditions to prevent or reduce the reoccurrence of mosquito development.

The California Health and Safety Code (§2000 et seq) authorizes MVCDs to conduct surveillance and control of mosquitoes, prevent the reoccurrence of mosquitoes, and to legally abate the production of mosquitoes or public nuisance, defined as "Any activity that supports the development, attraction, or harborage of vectors, or that facilitates the introduction or spread of vectors." Landowners, both public and private, are subject to civil penalties of \$1,000 per day plus costs associated with control the mosquitoes.

To reduce the impacts to public health and the effects on public services, and to promote cooperative relationships between local government and public and private landowners, the MVCDs recommend that property owners implement mosquito prevention best management practices (BMPs) on lands developed for wetlands, ecosystem restoration projects, migratory bird habitat, and other man-made aquatic features.

The MVCDs have worked with several groups to develop mosquito prevention BMPS for wetlands and other flooded sites; following are examples of that work:

- The MVCDs worked with the Delta Protection Commission (DPC) to develop recommendations on mosquito prevention strategies for wetlands and land flooding

(<http://www.delta.ca.gov>). The recommendations were developed to reduce mosquito populations, reduce the amount of pesticides applied to the environment, limit landowner liability, and lessen the impact to public services. Policy 10 (P-10) of the Natural Resources Section of DPC's Land Use and Resource Management Plan states:

“Ensure that design, construction, and management of any flooding program to provide seasonal wildlife and aquatic habitat on agricultural lands, duck club lands and additional seasonal and tidal wetlands, shall incorporate “best management practices” to minimize vectors including mosquito breeding opportunities, and shall be coordinated with the local vector control districts, (each of the four vector control districts in the Delta provides specific wetland/mosquito criteria to landowners within their district).”

- The MVCDs, through the Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California (MVCAC), worked with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to develop recommendations and BMPs in the guide “Best Management Practices for Mosquito Control in California” (<http://www.westnile.ca.gov/resources>). This publication has become the standard set of BMPs recommended by the MVCDs for use by public and private landowners when developing wetlands, ecosystem restoration projects, and other aquatic features.
- In conjunction with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and other resource groups, the MVCDs assisted in the development of the guide “Technical Guide to Best Management Practices for Mosquito Control in Managed Wetlands” (<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/lands/wetland/mosquito.html>).

In conclusion, the MVCDs recommend that the EIR include the impacts to public health and the effects on public services we feel will result with implementation of the Plan. Additionally, we are supportive of DSC pursuing the requirement to implement mosquito prevention BMPS by public and private landowners as partial mitigation of these impacts.

Please feel free to contact the representatives of the Delta-area MVCDs if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

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