

Butte Strong Fund issues \$300,000 grant to combat West Nile

Vector Control now has tools to “Get the job done”



Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District employee Eric Gohre shows a trap full of live mosquitoes he set near Mendon’s Nursery on May 2, 2019 in Paradise. (Matt Bates — Enterprise-Record)

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OROVILLE — Local agencies have teamed up to help Butte County combat the growing mosquito problem and the West Nile virus. The Butte Strong Fund, managed by the North Valley Community Foundation, has just approved a grant of more than \$300,000 to the Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District. This grant is to specifically address the public health threat of mosquitoes in the Camp Fire burn scar area.

The Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District asked for the financial help for increased labor costs and insecticides needed to address mosquito breeding sources in the Paradise area according to Butte Strong Fund officials. The Butte Strong Fund Committee, composed of nine community members, granted its unanimous approval of the proposal at a meeting on Friday.

“The committee members were well aware of the potential problem, and they voted the night after a rainstorm created more mosquito-breeding pools,” said David Little, director of communications for the North Valley Community Foundation.

“The mosquito district needs to jump on this issue now and financing to do so was uncertain, so the committee wanted to create some certainty by helping now.”

Last week local public health officials confirmed that Butte County is consistently in the top five counties among the state for the highest number of West Nile cases reported each year. In a press release sent out Monday morning Alexa Benson-Valavanis, president and CEO for the North Valley Community Foundation, said the grant will specifically address issues related to much needed funding for Butte County’s Mosquito and Vector District.

“We learned two weeks ago that state and federal funding was not readily available to support the massive increase of work in our Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District in the aftermath of the Camp Fire,” Benson-Valavanis said in the release. “This is exactly the sort of gap in resources and time delays that can cause real danger to not only the people already deeply impacted by the Camp Fire, but the entire region. As I’ve said over and over again, the NVCF will play whatever role we need to help us recover from this disaster. The last thing we need is another crisis.”

District manager of the Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District Matt Ball says the grant could not have come at a better time.

“This (grant) is really a godsend,” Ball said. “We can now hire more staff and cover the burn scar more rapidly while identifying the known and unknown mosquito breeding sources located in the Camp Fire burn scar area.”

According to Ball, one pesticide that will be used to target mosquito larva is hormone based and disrupts the aging process by tricking the mosquito larva into not fully maturing and reaching adulthood. Although some local residents may have concerns about the amount of pesticides that will be used, Ball says there is no cause for concern.

“The pesticides we are using are larvacides and adulticides, which target mosquito larva and adult mosquitoes separately. These products are not environmentally hazardous,” Ball said. “Its actually soil based and considered biological. This pesticide is non toxic, safe for the environment and they are also safe for the local ecosystem and nearby wildlife — frogs, fish, etc. When we use adulticides and fog for mature mosquitoes, that product also poses little to no risk for humans, plants and the surrounding environment.

Mosquitoes can carry West Nile virus and other blood-borne diseases, such as encephalitis and malaria according to local health officials. They transmit the disease to humans, horses and other animals after feeding off infected birds.

West Nile virus is present in mosquitoes in Butte County every summer and officials say the best way to avoid the virus is not to get bit. That will prove to be a new challenge this summer on the

ridge. Shortly following the Camp Fire, new mosquito breeding sources are prevalent on properties where nobody is living. That includes stagnant swimming pools, septic tanks, ponds and miscellaneous containers that hold water like flower pots, clogged rain gutters, wheelbarrows, birdbaths and burned boats.

About the Butte Strong Fund

The Butte Strong Fund was established earlier this year as a partnership of three major fundraising efforts by the NVCF, Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. and the Aaron Rodgers NorCal Fire Recovery Fund. The Butte Strong Fund provides funding for eligible organizations or local government entities that are directly serving people affected by the Camp Fire. Individual assistance is handled through those organizations. For more information on the Butte Strong Fund visit [visiting www.buttestrongfund.org](http://www.buttestrongfund.org).