

Consolidation coming for Butte County mosquito districts

By [Steve Schoonover](#), Chico Enterprise-Record

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Oroville >> Changes have been set in motion for Butte County's mosquito districts, but the changes are likely to happen slowly.

At its meeting in December, the Local Agency Formation Commission approved a municipal service review for the three districts that will ultimately see the Oroville Mosquito Abatement District absorbed into the Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District.

The review also sees the larger district annexing about 15,000 acres of rice lands from the Durham Mosquito Control District, which the Durham district is unable to treat.

Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District Manager Matt Ball said earlier this month he was currently working with LAFCO General Manager Steve Lucas to prepare the annexation from Durham, as he had no experience in such things.

"They don't come up that often," Ball said. "I've never done something like this."

The Durham district is not opposing the annexation because it currently is not treating the area. Battling mosquitos in rice lands requires aircraft that Durham does not have. The larger district has several crop-duster-like planes.

The Durham district was also given some improvements to make in the year ahead and will stop fogging the north end of the Butte Creek Country Club, which is in the Butte district.

The Oroville district board met on Dec. 20 and voted unanimously to dissolve, and also to contract with the Butte district to handle mosquito and vector control while the dissolution is taking place.

Not much has happened since then, and LAFCO's Lucas said that's largely because there's no one designated to do it.

The Oroville district's sole full-time employee, General Manager Jeffrey Cahn, was hit and killed by a vehicle in September on Highway 99 north of Chico, and no one has been appointed to do his administrative duties on an interim basis.

That includes everything from signing an agreement with the Butte district, to something as routine as posting a board agenda legally.

“It further demonstrates why the commission decided to dissolve the district and move forward,” Lucas said.

The district has hired a lawyer and a bookkeeper who is trying to get the district’s financial records in shape for an audit, Lucas said. The district’s finances had not been audited for three years, and the financial records had gone missing but were recently recovered.

Lucas said he believes the Oroville board will meet in the next few weeks and give someone the authority to contract for services from the Butte district, so Oroville residents can be protected from mosquito-borne diseases.

They also need to get the three-year audit done, necessary before dissolution can begin.

“These two things must be done in the most urgent fashion,” Lucas said.

The Oroville district board still only has three members, but that is a quorum of the five-member allotment.

A proposal to reappoint two members to the mosquito district board whose terms had expired Dec. 31 and add two additional members was on the Board of Supervisors agenda Jan. 9, but Supervisor Bill Connolly of Oroville objected.

He said the district had voted to dissolve itself at its last meeting. And while he supported reappointing the two existing members, he couldn’t see adding two more, and his view was supported by the board.

Lucas said adding two newcomers might have delayed the dissolution process as they got up to speed.

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