

Grand Jury recommends consolidating Butte County mosquito districts



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Oroville >> The Butte County Grand Jury has recommended that mosquito districts in Durham and Oroville be folded into the larger Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District.

Currently, the three operate separately and each collect parcel taxes to deal with the insects.

The smaller districts aren't able to provide things such as insect and disease surveillance and rely too much on adult insecticide, the report states.

Right now, the Butte County district covers all of the county except the areas covered by the other two. Durham and Oroville are treated spring through fall, and only by ground, not by air.

The larger district also charges an average of about \$10 per parcel, while the charges per parcel for the two others are higher, per parcel.

One of the reasons for the change, as cited by the Grand Jury, is that mosquitoes move quickly through the county, and the effectiveness of mosquito control in one district can impact residents in another mosquito district.

Back in 2004, the Butte County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) conducted a review and also recommended consolidation.

Mosquitoes can spread disease, including West Nile virus. More recently there have been concerns about the Zika virus, which is also spread by mosquitoes.

Some of the advantages going for the Butte County mosquito district are the ability to spray from the air, ability to track diseases spread through mosquitoes, a staff entomologist and mosquito fish breeding program, the report highlights. Butte County's program also uses "sentinel chickens," to test for the diseases.

Butte County also keeps lists of people who have asked to be excluded from spray areas, whereas the Durham and Oroville have a less reliable system for opting out, the report states.

The Grand Jury concludes that residents in Oroville and Durham would receive better service if the three districts were consolidated.

The next step is a response from LAFCO.