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Public Meeting Addresses Mosquito Problem

About 100 residents of the Monument Park and Monument Ranch communities attended a public meeting Oct. 8 to discuss concerns about the unusually large number of mosquitos, which have appeared after this summer's rains. After each rain, mosquitos begin to breed in ponds created by water runoff.

The problem arises, in large part, because the affected homes lie next to a nature preserve, which was created to protect the native species of plants and animals. The preserves, owned by the Riverside Conservation Authority (RCA), abuts the San Jacinto River, which although dry most of the year, also ponds during heavy rains.

Perris officials have worked to address resident concerns by draining standing water on RCA property, arranging with the Riverside County Environmental Health Department to spray to kill mosquito larvae, and working with other county and regional agencies and the subdivision developer on a long-term resolution to the problem.

Working with the City to address mosquito concerns were Supervisor Marion Ashley's Office, Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority, Riverside County Flood Control, Riverside County Department of Environmental Health, Kaufman & Broad real estate developers and representatives of Tri-Lake Consultant's, the City's engineering firm.

Members of the City Council addressed the audience and pledged to provide relief to affected residents.

"The problem of mosquitos is something that the whole City Council is aware of," said Perris Mayor Daryl Busch. "All the main players are here tonight to come together to solve the problem long-term."



Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Tonya Burke and City Councilwoman Rita Rogers distribute mosquito traps during a public hearing attended by about 100 City residents.

The plan to attack this problem includes:

- Enhance the filtration basins where the water first enters the RCA property and pools.
- Construction of a drainage channel to allow more water to flow into the San Jacinto River.
- Pumping large accumulations of water until the increased drainage measures have been put in place.
- Increased treatment of ponding water by County Vector Control to kill mosquito larvae, along with continued misting and fogging of adult-breeding sites in trees stands.
- Providing information to residents so they can contact Vector Control directly, without first having to call the City.



Perris City Councilman David Starr Rabb addresses the crowd at the Oct. 8 hearing: "We're going to get something done. We're going to make it happen."

Perris Assistant City Manager Ron Carr, who moderated the meeting, assured the people that this was an issue the City takes seriously and that the City will work closely with the developer and the necessary agencies to address their concerns.

Several residents said they appreciate the City's efforts and were glad to pick up tips about how to minimize mosquitos at their homes. Such tips include getting rid of standing water created by over irrigation of lawns and present in rain gutters, bird feeders, pet bowls and planters.

Residents learned that even the small amount of water contained in a bottle cap can serve as a mosquito-breeding site. Other tips include wearing long-sleeves, long pants, and socks when outdoors to help keep mosquitoes away from skin. Installing tight-fitting screens on windows and doors helps keep mosquitos outside.



Perris Assistant City Manager Ron Carr (black shirt, right) meets Wednesday with members of a construction crew building a drainage channel to move water away from residences in the Monument Park and Monument Ranch neighborhoods in the City's south end.

Mayor Pro-Tem Tonya Burke said disease-carrying mosquitos potentially could impact the health of Perris residents, one of the City's top priorities. She was pleased to learn the City has a plan to cope with mosquitos and offered tips to prevent them from breeding.

"Our commitment to addressing and resolving this problem is very important," Burke said. "We are united to serve our community. I believe our community saw and heard the commitment."



Perris Public Works crews activate an electronic sign informing Monument Park and Monument Ranch residents about Thursday's mosquito-spraying efforts.

City Councilman David Starr Rabb praised the efforts of several residents who attended a meeting of RCA to raise a call for action.

"This was a great meeting with a great turnout and good input," Rabb said. "We're going to get something done. We're going to make it happen."

City Councilwoman Rita Rogers echoed those sentiments. She told the crowd that she is a grandmother of nine and a great-grandmother of two and so she knows how concerned other parents are about exposing their children to potential health risks. She said the current mosquito outbreak is the first in her 15 years on the City Council.

"We are very concerned and we really want to do something," Rogers said. "We will work on it until a permanent solution is found."



Vector-control specialists will spray breeding grounds to reduce the presence of mosquitos in the Monument park and Monument Ranch communities.

Monument Park resident Josh Tiedeman-Bell said he was pleased elected officials addressed the crowd and promised to seek a speedy solution.

"I appreciate the City of Perris trying to address our concerns and alleviate the problem," he said.

Another Monument Park resident, Edd Olha, said he appreciated the City bringing together various agencies to address the mosquito concerns.

"Now it's time for someone to stand up and make things happen," he said.

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