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Mosquito Control Guidelines

The County of Santa Clara Vector Control District¹ has the responsibility for providing enforcement of mosquito control measures when public health is threatened. It is concerned with the spread of insects and other nuisance pests that could result from poorly designed and/or maintained structures, especially those containing standing water. Detention basins, water quality wetlands and infiltration basins are examples of stormwater treatment control structures that may offer prime breeding habitats for mosquitoes and other nuisance pests if not properly designed and maintained. Stagnant water associated with storm water treatment can provide habitat for the aquatic stages of mosquitoes. The County of Santa Clara and other California vector control districts are particularly concerned that the expanding number of treatment controls may result in increased mosquito habitat at the same time as the potential arrival of West Nile Virus.

This appendix presents guidance for designing and maintaining stormwater treatment measures to control mosquitoes. Project sponsors are responsible for incorporating this guidance as appropriate in their treatment measure designs and maintenance plans.

F.1 Design Guidance for Mosquito Control

The following design considerations were adapted from guidance prepared by the California Department of Public Health,² and are provided for project sponsors to use when selecting, designing, and constructing stormwater treatment measures.

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²California Department of Public Health, 2010. Best Management Practices for Mosquito Control on California State Properties.

General Design Principles

- Preserve natural drainage. Better site design measures reduce the amount of stormwater runoff and provide for natural on-site runoff control. This will reduce the number of stormwater treatment measures required.
- In flat areas, where standing water may occur for more than five days under existing conditions, consider grading to make minor increases in slope to improve surface drainage and prevent standing water.
- Select stormwater treatment measures based on site-specific conditions. Designs that take into account site conditions tend to improve drainage and limit the occurrence of stagnant water.
- Careful consideration should be made before intermittently flooded stormwater treatment measures are selected for handling stormwater. Facilities that pond water temporarily (e.g., extended detention basins) should be **designed to drain water completely within five³ days of a storm event**. Avoid placement of extended detention basins and underground structures in areas where they are likely to remain wet (i.e., high water tables). The principal outlet should have positive drainage.
- When a new stormwater treatment measure is being installed, consider selecting a type that does not require a wet pond or other permanent pool of water.
- Properly design storm drains. The sheltered environment inside storm drains can promote mosquito breeding. Pipes should be designed and constructed for a rate of flow that flushes the system of sediment and prevents water backing up in the pipe. Storm drains should be constructed so that the invert out is at the same elevation as the interior bottom to prevent standing water.
- Use grouted rock energy dissipaters instead of loose rock.
- If a stormwater treatment measure holds water for over five days, due to an outdated design or improper construction and maintenance, do one of the following:
 - Perform proper maintenance and reinspect to see if conditions improve;
 - Select or design an alternative (or modified) device that provides adequate pollutant removal and complete drainage in five days;
 - Contact the County of Santa Clara Vector Control District to determine whether conditions may allow a longer drain time.

³ The Department of Public Health's 2010 guidance recommends that treatment measures drain within four days. However, the Santa Clara County Vector Control District recommends limiting the duration of standing water to 5 days in Santa Clara County based on local climate conditions and mosquito species.

General Access Requirements for Mosquito Control

The following requirements are necessary to provide mosquito abatement personnel access to treatment measures for inspection and abatement activities.

- Design stormwater treatment measures to be easily and safely accessible without the need for special requirements (e.g., OSHA requirements for “confined space”).
- If utilizing covers, include in the design spring-loaded or light-weight access hatches that can be opened easily for inspection.
- Provide all-weather road access (with provisions for turning a full-size work vehicle) along at least one side of large above-ground structures that are less than 25 feet wide. For structures that are greater than 25 feet wide, a perimeter road is required for access to all sides.
- Control vegetation (by removal, thinning, or mowing) periodically to prevent barriers to access.

Dry System Design Principles for Mosquito Control

- Structures should be designed so they do not hold standing water for more than five days.
- Incorporate features that prevent or reduce the possibility of clogged discharge orifices (e.g., debris screens). The use of weep holes is not recommended due to rapid clogging – except in bubble-up inlet systems.
- Use the hydraulic grade line of the site to select a stormwater treatment measure that allows water to flow by gravity through the structure. Pumps are not recommended because they are subject to failure and often require sumps that hold water.
- Design distribution piping and containment basins with adequate slopes to drain fully and prevent standing water. The design slope should take into consideration buildup of sediment between maintenance periods. Compaction during grading may also be needed to avoid slumping and settling.
- Avoid the use of loose riprap or concrete depressions that may hold standing water.
- Avoid barriers, diversions, or flow spreaders that may retain standing water.
- Use mosquito netting to cover sand media filter sump pumps.
- Use aluminum “smoke proof” covers for any vault sedimentation basins.
- Properly design storm drain measures. The sheltered environment inside storm drains can promote mosquito breeding. Pipes should be designed and constructed for a rate of flow that flushes the system of sediment and prevents water backing up in the pipe.

Sumps, Wet Vaults, and Catch Basin Design Principles for Mosquito Control

- Completely seal structures that retain water permanently or longer than five days to prevent entry of adult mosquitoes. Adult female mosquitoes may penetrate openings as small as 1/16 inch (2 mm) to gain access to water for egg laying. Screening (24

mesh screens) can exclude mosquitoes, but it is subject to damage and is not a method of choice.

- If covers are used, they should be tight fitting with maximum allowable gaps or holes of 1/16 inch (2 mm) to exclude entry of adult mosquitoes. Gaskets are a more effective barrier when used properly.
- Any covers or openings to enclosed areas where stagnant water may pool must be large enough (2 feet by 3 feet) to permit access by vector control personnel for surveillance and, if necessary, abatement activities.
- If the sump, vault, or basin is sealed against mosquitoes, with the exception of the inlet and outlet, use a design that will submerge the inlet and outlet completely to reduce the available surface area of water for mosquito egg-laying (female mosquitoes can fly through pipes).
- Creative use of flapper or pinch valves, collapsible tubes and “brush curtains” may be effective for mosquito exclusion in certain designs.
- Design structures with the appropriate pumping, piping, valves, or other necessary equipment to allow for easy dewatering of the unit, if necessary.

Wet Ponds and Wetlands Design Principles for Mosquito Control

- If a wet pond or constructed, modified, or restored wetland must be built, appropriate and adequate funds must be allocated to support long-term site maintenance as well as routine monitoring and management of mosquitoes by a qualified agency.
- Long-term management of mosquitoes in wet ponds and wetlands should integrate biological control, vegetation management and other physical practices, and chemical control as appropriate.
- Provide for regular inspection of sites for detection of developing mosquito populations. Local factors may influence the overall effectiveness of certain approaches for mosquito reduction.
- Wet ponds and wetlands should maintain water quality sufficient to support surface-feeding fish such as mosquito fish (*Gambusia affinis*), which feed on immature mosquitoes and can aid significantly in mosquito control.
- If large predatory fish are present (e.g., perch and bass), mosquito fish populations may be negatively impacted or eradicated. In this case, careful vegetation management remains the only nonchemical mosquito control system.
- Where mosquito fish are not allowed, careful vegetation management remains the only nonchemical mosquito control system. Other predators such as dragonflies, diving beetles, birds, and bats feed on mosquitoes when available, but their effects are generally insufficient to preclude chemical treatment.
- Perform routine maintenance to reduce emergent plant densities. Emergent vegetation provides mosquito larvae with refuge from predators, protection from surface disturbances, and increased nutrient availability while interfering with monitoring and control efforts.

- Whenever possible, maintain wet ponds and wetlands at depths in excess of 4 feet to limit the spread of invasive emergent vegetation such as cattails (*Typha* spp.). Deep, open areas of exposed water are typically unsuitable for mosquito immatures due to surface disturbances and predation. Deep zones also provide refuge areas for fish and beneficial macroinvertebrates should the densely vegetated emergent zones be drained.
- If possible, compartmentalize managed treatment wetlands so the maximum width of ponds does not exceed two times the effective distance (40 feet) of land-based application technologies for mosquito control agents.
- Build shoreline perimeters as steep and uniform as practicable to discourage dense plant growth.
- Use concrete or liners in shallow areas to discourage unwanted plant growth where vegetation is unnecessary.
- Eliminate floating vegetation conducive to mosquito production, such as water hyacinth (*Eichhornia* spp.), duckweed (*Lemna* and *Spirodela* spp.), water primrose, parrot's feather, duckweed, and filamentous algal mats.
- Make shorelines accessible to maintenance and vector control crews for periodic maintenance, control, and removal of emergent vegetation, as well as for routine mosquito monitoring and abatement procedures, if necessary.
- Improve designs of permanent pools. Minimize shallow depths and increase circulation in ponds. Do not plant dense stands of vegetation that impede flow circulation. Permanently flooded measures should be stocked with native *Gambusia* minnows to foster biological predation on mosquito larvae.
- Do not use stormwater structures to meet endangered species mitigation requirements. Aquatic habitat for endangered species should not be created near areas populated by humans.

F.2 Maintenance Guidance for Mosquito Control

Routine and timely maintenance is critical for suppressing mosquito breeding as well as for meeting local water quality goals. If maintenance is neglected or inappropriate for a given site, even structures designed to be the least “mosquito friendly” may become significant breeding sites. Although general principles of vector control are described here, maintenance guidelines for individual treatment measures are often site-specific.

The maintenance principles given below are intended to reduce the mosquito population. These principles should be incorporated, as appropriate, in maintenance plans developed for stormwater treatment control measures and in the ongoing maintenance and inspection of treatment measures.

General Maintenance Principles

- With the exception of certain treatment control measures designed to hold permanent water, treatment measures should drain completely within five days to effectively suppress vector production.
- Any circumstances that restrict the flow of water from a system as designed should be corrected. Debris or silt build-up obstructing an outfall structure should be removed. Under drains and filtration media should be inspected periodically and cleaned out or replaced as needed.
- Conduct maintenance activities regularly, in accordance with a municipality-approved maintenance plan.

Vegetation Management Maintenance Principles

- Conduct annual vegetative management, such as removing weeds and restricting growth of aquatic vegetation to the periphery of wet ponds.
- Remove grass cuttings (unless using a mulching mower), trash and other debris, especially at outlet structures.
- Avoid producing ruts when mowing (water may pool in ruts).

Dry System Maintenance Principles for Mosquito Control

- Extended detention basins are usually designed to detain water for 40 or 48 hours. If they detain water for longer than five days, they are poorly maintained.
- If a detention basin has been installed at an inappropriate location (e.g., on a site where the water table is too close to the surface), and if elimination or modification of the system is not possible then mosquitoes must be controlled with larvicides. The larvicide operation, in order to be effective, must be supported by a quality inspection program. Larvacides should only be applied by licensed pesticide applicators.

Underground Structure Maintenance Principles for Mosquito Control

- Prevent mosquito access to underground treatment control measures that may have standing water (i.e., seal openings that are 1/16-inch in diameter or greater).
- Provide vector control agencies access to underground measures that may have standing water.

Infiltration and Filtration Device Maintenance Principles for Mosquito Control

- Infiltration trenches and sand filter structures should not hold water for longer than 48 hours. If they retain water for longer than 48 hours, they are poorly designed or maintained.