



History of Mosquito Control in California

MOSQUITO ABATEMENT DISTRICTS

Over a century ago, California enacted legislation to combat mosquito threats in the state. The California Mosquito Abatement Districts Act of 1915 (AB 1590) aimed to control the dangers that mosquitoes posed to California's economic development and health and well-being of its residents. More than 100 years later, the threat is just as great, and efforts to battle mosquitoes and other vectors are even more critical to protect the health of more than 39 million Californians.

INITIAL MOSQUITO CONTROL ACTION IN CALIFORNIA

The first recorded mosquito control efforts in California, under the direction of University of California professors, were implemented to address the overwhelming impact of salt marsh mosquitoes on residents and workers around the San Francisco Bay marshlands in San Rafael (1904) and in Burlingame (1905).

FIRST ANTI-MALARIA CONTROL EFFORTS

The devastating effects of malaria in California's Central Valley in 1908 led to an education and demonstration program on malaria and Anopheline mosquito control conducted by professor William B. Herms of the University of California, Berkeley, and sponsored by the Southern Pacific Railway. The first publicly-funded anti-malaria program in California was started in Penryn in the Sacramento Valley in 1910, and later that year, a similar program was started in nearby Oroville.

PEST ABATEMENT DISTRICTS

Although the California Mosquito Abatement Districts Act was enacted in 1915, there was no legislation to address other public health vectors until 1935. Legislation authorizing the creation of pest abatement districts was passed in 1935, but still only a few districts were formed for mosquito control, including the Carpinteria Pest Abatement District, formed in 1936, and the Eastside District, formed in 1939. The powers and legal bases are very similar to mosquito abatement districts, but the former provide for abatement of "any plant, animal, insect, fish, or other matter or material" that was deemed a pest.

COORDINATING ROLE OF STATE PUBLIC HEALTH

In 1946, California's Department of Public Health (Department of Health Services) created a Bureau of Vector Control (Environmental Management Branch). The Branch was staffed with experts who assisted in the formation of many new mosquito abatement districts. The Branch also provided a number of technical services including disease surveillance and research studies throughout California.