



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: November 9, 2011

09

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT: PUBLIC NUISANCE CONDITIONS CAUSED BY EYE GNAT BREEDING
AT ORGANIC FARMS (DISTRICTS: ALL)

SUMMARY:

Overview

Residents of Jacumba and Escondido have endured infestations of eye gnats for years. In Jacumba, the source of the eye gnats was proven to be Bornt Farms, an organic farm adjacent to the community. For the past three years, the Farm & Home Advisor/University of California Cooperative Extension has been conducting research to identify measures for the farmer to implement to impede eye gnat breeding.

For the last two years, the Department of Environmental Health has initiated a voluntary agreement with the Jacumba farmer to apply eye gnat prevention measures at the farm. While there has been a reduction in the number of eye gnats caught in traps, the eye gnats are still adversely affecting the community, and the farmer has not consistently complied with the voluntary agreement.

Research has also shown that an organic farm in the San Pasqual Valley is producing great numbers of eye gnats, causing widespread irritation to residents in Escondido and Rancho Bernardo. While the farmer has agreed to implement management practices recommended by the Farm & Home Advisor, residents remain concerned that eye gnats continue to negatively impact the community.

Today's action directs the Chief Administrative Officer to work with the Farm Bureau and other interested parties and return in 90 days with recommendations outlining an approach that would address the eye gnat problem. A tougher strategy is needed to address this issue with the goal of reducing the eye gnats to an acceptable level to lessen adverse impacts on residents.

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Recommendation(s)

SUPERVISOR JACOB AND SUPERVISOR SLATER-PRICE

Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to work with the Farm Bureau and other interested parties and return in 90 days with recommendations outlining an approach that would address the eye gnat problem.

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact to this action.

Business Impact Statement

N/A

Advisory Board Statement

N/A

BACKGROUND:

Eye gnats are tiny insects that breed in irrigated agriculture areas in the warmer climates of the southern United States. They become a nuisance to humans and animals when they attack the eyes, nose and mouth, seeking a protein source for their breeding. While eye gnats are endemic in San Diego County, farming operations can dramatically increase eye gnat breeding.

Residents of Jacumba have registered complaints about eye gnats hindering their ability to go outside of their homes, which has a significant negative impact on their quality of life. Long suspected as the source of the eye gnats was Bornt Farms, an organic farm whose crops are grown adjacent to the community of Jacumba. The eye gnat problem increased as Bornt Farms increased the acreage of its production crops. Due to organic farming regulations, organic farms are not allowed to use pesticides that would normally keep eye gnats under control.

In 2008, meetings took place with the community of Jacumba and the Departments of Environmental Health, Agriculture Weights and Measures and the Farm & Home Advisor. The Farm & Home Advisor began research on measures that the farmer could use to reduce eye gnat breeding. In 2010, the Department of Environmental Health entered into a voluntary agreement with Bornt Farms to apply measures that the Farm & Home Advisor identified as possible solutions to reducing eye gnats. This agreement was amended and renewed in 2011 subsequent to consultation between the Department of Environmental Health and the Farm & Home Advisor.

While there has been a reduction in the number of eye gnats caught in the Jacumba traps, the adverse effect of eye gnats on residents remains present. The farmer has also been inconsistent in his compliance with the agreement. The community of Jacumba has urged the County to take action to reduce the eye gnat population to a tolerable level.

Research has also shown that an organic farm in the San Pasqual Valley is producing great numbers of eye gnats, causing widespread irritation to residents in Escondido and Rancho

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Bernardo. While the farmer has agreed to implement management practices recommended by the Farm & Home Advisor, residents remain concerned that eye gnats continue to negatively impact the community.

It is necessary for the County to implement a tougher strategy to address this issue. The goal is for farmers to reduce the number of eye gnats to lessen adverse impacts on residents. Today's action directs the Chief Administrative Officer to work with the Farm Bureau and other interested parties and return in 90 days with recommendations outlining an approach that would address the eye gnat problem.

Linkage to the County of San Diego Strategic Plan

N/A

Respectfully submitted,

DIANNE JACOB
SUPERVISOR, SECOND DISTRICT

PAM SLATER-PRICE
SUPERVISOR, THIRD DISTRICT

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A

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AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET

REQUIRES FOUR VOTES: Yes No

WRITTEN DISCLOSURE PER COUNTY CHARTER SECTION 1000.1 REQUIRED
 Yes No

PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTIONS:
N/A

BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE:
N/A

BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS:
N/A

MANDATORY COMPLIANCE:
N/A

**ORACLE AWARD NUMBER(S) AND CONTRACT AND/OR REQUISITION
NUMBER(S):**
N/A

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: District Two and District Three, Board of Supervisors

OTHER CONCURRENCE(S): N/A

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