



LAKE COUNTY VECTOR CONTROL DISTRICT

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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LAKE COUNTY VECTOR CONTROL USES DRONE TO BATTLE WEST NILE VIRUS

Clearlake Oaks, Calif. –

The Lake County Vector Control District used a drone to make a mosquito control application to the water in the algae-and primrose-choked channels in the Clearlake Keys on Friday, August 26.

The application was made after weekly mosquito trapping and larval sampling showed an increase in the number of *Culex* mosquitoes in the area. Five mosquito samples and one dead bird from the Clearlake Oaks area have tested positive for West Nile virus this year.

The District contracted with Leading Edge Aerial Technologies (LEAT) to use the six-foot diameter drone to apply a microbial mosquito larvicide where the immature mosquitoes were developing. They applied granular VectoMax FG, which is a bacterial mosquito larvicide that is OMRI-approved for use in organic crops and sensitive habitats.

“I’m excited that we can use drone technology to protect our community from mosquitoes and West Nile virus,” said Jamesina J. Scott, Ph.D., the District Manager and Research Director of the Lake County Vector Control District. “The drone is precise, quiet, and efficient. We were able to treat mosquito sources that we literally could not access to treat any other way. The channels where the mosquitoes are developing are too shallow or weed-choked for our boats, but too deep, muddy, and uneven for us to access by foot, and we cannot use a helicopter or a plane to apply over a dense residential community like this.”

Leading Edge Aerial Technologies (LEAT) is a company focused on Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), commonly referred to as drones. They have been inventing droplet analysis and aerial application technologies for over 35 years and have worked with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on aerial spraying via UAS since the beginning. LEAT is licensed by the Federal Aviation Administration for aerial applications using UAS. These Federal requirements include an FAA 137 Certificate, a UAS Certificate of Authorization waiver for the aircraft used and all pilots are licensed pilots both for manned and unmanned aircraft. Leading Edge also is licensed with the California Department of Pesticide Regulations (CA DPR) as a business. Prior to any pilot performing aerial applications in a county the company, pilots, and equipment are registered with the county agricultural department.

“We have a great relationship with the residents and the Clearlake Keys Property Owners Association,” said Brad Hayes, Vector Control Technician II at the Lake County Vector Control District. They are

appreciative of the mosquito control work we do, and invested in keeping the water in the Keys in good condition.”

Weekly trapping has shown a decline in mosquito numbers since the treatment. Countywide, 7 mosquito samples, 3 sentinel chickens, and two dead birds have tested positive for West Nile virus this year, including 5 mosquito samples and 1 dead bird from the Clearlake Oaks area. The positive mosquitoes were western encephalitis mosquitoes (*Culex tarsalis*), which is the main vector of West Nile virus to people.

The Lake County Vector Control District provides mosquito and vector control services to our community. Residents with questions or who would like help with a mosquito problem, including reporting a neglected pool or spa, or who have an in-ground yellowjacket nest on their property that they want treated, should contact the Lake County Vector Control District at (707) 263-4770 from 7:30 AM -4:00 PM Monday through Friday, or request service online anytime at <https://www.lcvcd.org/request-service-d649036>.

Residents are encouraged to report dead birds to identify potential West Nile virus activity. All dead bird reports from the public are critical in helping the District direct mosquito operations. Report dead birds to the state’s toll-free hotline at 1-877-968-2473 (1-877-WNV-BIRD) or online at the California Department of Public Health's website <https://westnile.ca.gov/report>.

For more information about the Lake County Vector Control District and its services, please visit our website www.LCVCD.org. For information about West Nile virus, visit <http://westnile.ca.gov/>. Information about mosquito repellents can be found on the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/fag/repellent.html>.

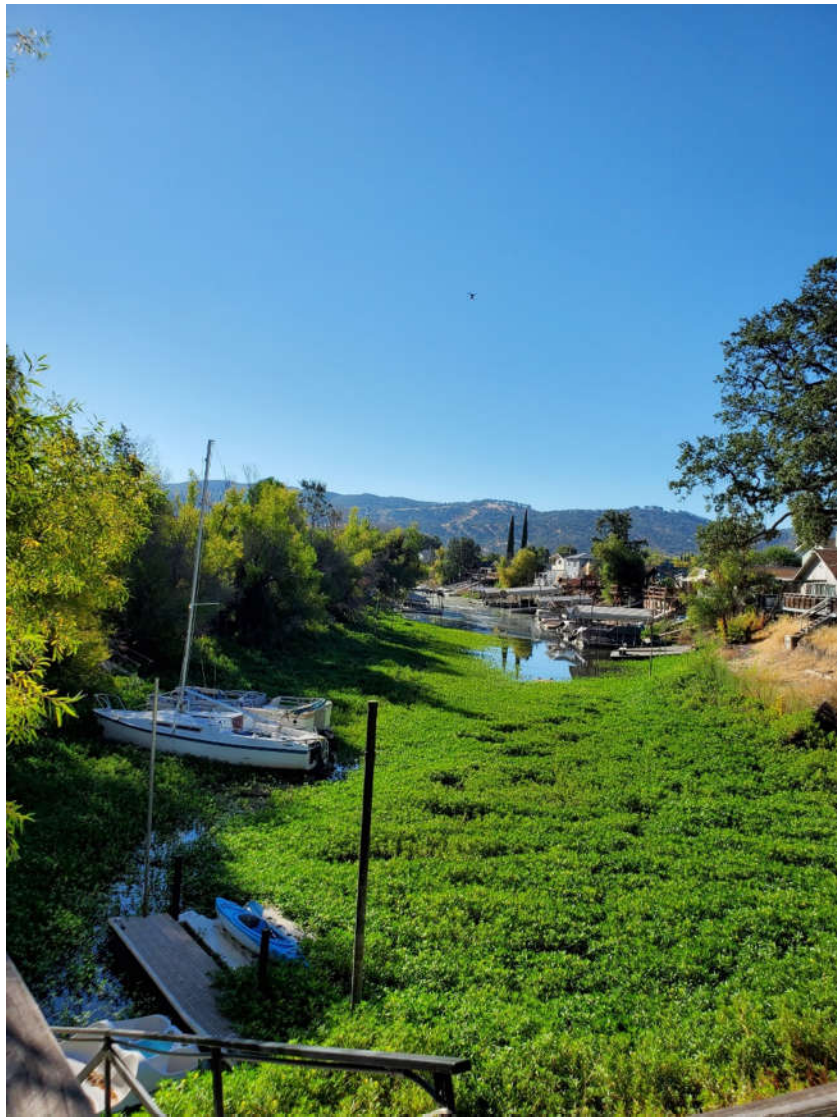
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The Lake County Vector Control District used this drone to apply organic mosquito control granules to algae- and weed-choked channels in the Clearlake Keys that were not accessible by boat or on foot.



Vector Control Technician Terry Sanderson reviews the treatment plan with UAV Pilot Joe Daviss of Leading Edge Application Technologies.



The water primrose in this Clearlake Keys channel provides sheltered water where *Culex* mosquitoes lay their eggs and grow.



This may look like dried mud, but it's not. The lower half of this photos shows a channel clogged with mats of *Lyngbya* algae covering the water, creating an ideal habitat for mosquitoes that can transmit West Nile virus.