

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS



Department of Agricultural Resources

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COMMISSIONER

State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board Meeting

Date: 4/13/23 from 11:30 a.m. – 1:30p.m.

Location: Meeting held remotely via Zoom

1. **Call to order and attendance:**

The meeting was called to order by MDAR Commissioner, Ashley Randle, at 11:33 a.m. additional SRB members in attendance included Jim Straub (DCR), and Nancy Lin (DEP). A meeting quorum was met.

2. **Approval of meeting minutes from 12/12/22 SRB meeting (Vote Required):**

Ashley Randle noted that the meeting minutes were distributed prior to the meeting. Ashley Randle entertained a motion to approve the meeting minutes as written. There were no further discussions regarding the meeting minutes from 12/12/22. A motion was made by Jim Straub. Seconded by Nancy Lin. A roll call was conducted. Ashley Randle (aye), Jim Straub (aye), Nancy Lin (aye). The meeting minutes were approved.

3. **SRB vote to appoint a new Board Chair (Vote Required):**

Ashley Randle entertained a motion to be appointed as the SRB Chair. A motion was made by Nancy Lin and seconded by Jim Straub. A roll call vote was conducted. Nancy Lin (aye), Jim Straub (aye), Ashley Randle (aye). Ashley Randle commented that she looked forward to being SRB Chair. Ashley Randle also acknowledged Tim Deschamps for his 40-year anniversary and commitment to service with the State.

4. **Review of the Jamestown Canyon Virus (JCV) testing proposal (Vote Required):**

Ashely Randle introduced Alisha Bouchard, MDAR Deputy Commissioner and Chief of Staff, who provided an overview of the Jamestown Canyon Virus (JCV) testing proposal. Alisha Bouchard noted that UMass Amherst had received a \$10 million, five-year award from the CDC to create the [New England Center of Excellence in Vector-Borne Diseases](#). As part of this work UMass Amherst, DPH, and the MCDs would like to conduct a pilot project at no-cost to have the Mosquito Control Districts (MCDs) collect and submit mosquito samples to UMass to test for JCV. Alisha Bouchard noted that this was not part of the DPH surveillance program for arbovirus, but rather the data would be used to help inform whether additional action was needed, including a possible surveillance program for future planning in relation to JCV.

Alisha Bouchard added, that the MCDs role would be to collect samples and submit them to UMass for testing. Samples would be collected in the coming weeks and then submitted to UMass for testing over the summer. Results and information related to testing would be reviewed by DPH, who would coordinate with the SRB as to any next steps. It was noted that the data collection pilot program was not intended to be used to inform the public of additional arbovirus risks unless DPH so determined, and any release of information would be agreed

upon by DPH and the SRB. Alisha Bouchard asked the Mosquito Control Districts (MCDs) if they had anything to add. Gabrielle Sakolsky-Hoopers, Superintendent from the Cape Cod Mosquito Control District, added that there was a gap in knowledge and since DPH had not been able to do JCV testing themselves, she thought that this proposal was a fantastic opportunity from UMASS to allow the MCDs to get this for free. Alisha Bouchard thanked Gabrielle Sakolsky-Hoopers for her comments and asked if there were any additional comments from the MCDs and there were none.

Alisha Bouchard introduced Jennifer Forman-Orth, MDAR Environmental Biologist. Jennifer Forman-Orth commented that she thought it would be useful for the Board to hear more about JCV which was a mosquito borne illness found in the 1960s in CO. Jennifer Forman-Orth noted that 20 human cases of JCV were diagnosed every year nationally and that number had been increasing over the past two decades. Jennifer Forman-Orth commented that CT had been conducting JCV testing for over a decade and consistently found virus in the state. It was added that within the last decade there had been 10 JCV cases diagnosed in MA residents. Jennifer Forman-Orth noted that some of the issues that had been identified were determining which mosquito species were the major carriers of JCV and that white-tailed deer had been implicated as an important part of the virus amplification cycle. Jennifer Forman-Orth noted that a JCV testing pilot program would help identify which mosquitoes in our state commonly carry JCV and help determine where future surveillance should occur in order to identify any possibly hotspots of virus activity.

Jessica Burgess discussed the required actions that were necessary in order to try to facilitate a JCV testing pilot program. Jessica Burgess added that an SRB vote would be required to allow the JCV testing to take place, authorizing any written documentation to memorialize an agreement, which could be coordinated on the SRB behalf. It was noted that the control of sampling and release of information would be key things that would be covered in an agreement. Ashley Randle thanked Jessica Burgess for her overview and asked if there were questions. Nancy Lin had a question about testing for JCV in the Midwest states where the virus was discovered, and which mosquitoes were the vectors in those Mid-Western states. Jennifer Forman-Orth commented that information was not available right now but noted that two species of mosquitoes that are in MA had been identified as carriers.

Jim Straub asked if there were any testing parameters or outlines provided by UMASS. Jessica Burgess responded that everything had been discussion based to this point and a pause was necessary to address procurement questions. Jessica Burgess added that DPH had advised that UMASS had CDC funding and that UMASS would be the only suitable partner and there would be no cost to conduct the testing. It was added that SRB staff would work directly with the Board related to any necessary adjustments and would ensure that data sharing would be carefully controlled based on the comfort level of DPH and the SRB. It was noted that this was not a surveillance program, but rather was testing and data collection to determine the future feasibility of JCV testing becoming part of the State surveillance program.

Jim Straub asked if the pilot testing program was a rapid mosquito collection process and would it task the MCDs beyond their regular duties. The MCDs noted that this program would not task them beyond their regular duties. Tim Deschamps, Central MA Mosquito Control District Superintendent, discussed the trapping and testing process and noted that there was good data from the State of CT related to mosquito species being possible vectors for JCV. Jessica Burgess discussed the flow of information and that UMASS would be the one performing the JCV testing and would be giving the data to DPH for their review. Jessica Burgess noted that this agreement would be a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with UMASS and DPH on what the testing process would be. It was added that anything related to what would be done with collected data would come back to the SRB for further discussion.

Ashley Randle asked if there were any further questions and there were none. Ashley Randle entertained a motion to approve the JCV testing proposal. Nancy Lin made a motion. Jim Straub seconded the motion. There were no further discussions. Jessica Burgess requested that the SRB amend the motion to reflect their authorization for the SRB, MCDs, and other departmental staff to complete any documentation to facilitate the necessary proposal with UMASS. SRB members agreed to amend the motion to reflect the recommended

changes. Jim Straub made an amended motion. Nancy Lin seconded the amended motion. A roll call vote was conducted. Nancy Lin (aye), Jim Straub (aye), Ashley Randle (aye). Alex Giannantonio, SRB Operations Coordinator, introduced John Briggs as the new District Director for Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District.

5. Adjourn Meeting:

Hearing no further comments or questions, Ashley Randle entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. Nancy Lin made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Jim Straub. A roll call vote was conducted. Ashley Randle (aye), Jim Straub (aye), Nancy Lin (aye). The meeting was adjourned at 11:59 am.