

OFFICE OF AUDITS & ADVISORY SERVICES



VECTOR CONTROL BENEFIT ASSESSMENT AUDIT

FINAL REPORT

Chief of Audits: Juan R. Perez
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County of San Diego

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AUDITOR AND CONTROLLER

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JUAN R. PEREZ
CHIEF OF AUDITS

July 8, 2020

TO: Amy Harbert, Director
Department of Environmental Health

FROM: Juan R. Perez
Chief of Audits

FINAL REPORT: VECTOR CONTROL BENEFIT ASSESSMENT AUDIT

Enclosed is our report on the Vector Control Benefit Assessment Audit. As there are no findings and recommendations in the report, no audit response is required.

Thank you for the courteousness and cooperation extended to the Office of Audits & Advisory Services during the course of the audit.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (858) 495-5661.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Juan R. Perez".

JUAN R. PEREZ
Chief of Audits

AUD:PS:nb

Enclosure

c: Sarah Aghassi, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Land Use and Environment Group
Tracy Drager, Auditor and Controller
Renee Loewer, Group Finance Director, Land Use and Environment Group

INTRODUCTION

Audit Objective The Office of Audits & Advisory Services (OAAS) completed an audit of the Vector Benefit Assessment. The objective of the audit was to determine whether Mosquito, Vector and Disease Control Assessment funds are used in accordance with ballot measure provisions approved by voters.

Background The Vector Control Program (VCP) exists within the Department of Environmental Health (DEH) and is responsible for mosquito and vector-borne disease surveillance and control services across San Diego County. To support its core surveillance and control functions, the VCP also performs public outreach to educate residents and responds to vector-related complaints.

Prior to 1996, VCP services had been funded primarily by a service charge levied against all parcels in the County. When Proposition 218 was passed in 1996, it froze the service charge at \$3.00 for the Coastal Region and \$2.28 for both Inland Regions. Eventually, this fixed charge proved insufficient for the growing demand for vector control services and the protection of public health from vector-borne diseases, including West Nile virus. Therefore, in 2005, a new benefit assessment for improved mosquito, vector, and disease control services was approved by property owners within the County of San Diego. This new assessment was first levied in FY 2005-06 at a rate of \$8.55 per single-family equivalent benefit unit and has been modified and adjusted annually as needed.

The ballot measure included several layers of fiscal safeguards to ensure that all funds are expended appropriately. First, the funds raised can only be spent on mosquito control and disease prevention services within the County. Second, the funds are overseen by the Board of Supervisors with annual audits to ensure all funds are spent appropriately. And third, the budget for the services proposed for each year is presented to the public annually.

In addition to increasing funds for basic surveillance and control services, the 2005 benefit assessment provided funding for additional programs designed to improve the VCP's core detection and control mission. Examples of these programs are the Vector Habitat Remediation Program and the Vector Disease Diagnostic Laboratory.

In June 2019, the Board of Supervisors approved an increase of the benefit assessment rate to \$8.37 per single-family equivalent benefit unit which is a 5.5% increase from the adopted rate of \$7.93 for FY 2018-19. No change was requested to the existing service charge of \$3.00 for the Coastal Region and \$2.28 for both Inland Regions. The new Vector and Disease Control benefit assessment and the existing Vector Control service charges were placed on the tax roll for FY 2019-20.

DEH commissioned the annual audit to have an independent review of the benefit assessment funds to ensure that all funds are spent in accordance

with the provisions of the 2005 ballot measure and to satisfy the second layer of fiscal safeguards described above.

Audit Scope & Limitations

The scope of the audit included the benefit assessment expenditure for the last quarter of FY 2018-19 and first three quarters of FY 2019-20.

The total expenditure for the scoped period is \$6,446,998.17. A sample of \$1,682,280.94, equivalent to 26.09% of the total expenditures, was selected for testing.

This audit was conducted in conformance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing prescribed by the Institute of Internal Auditors as required by California Government Code, Section 1236.

Methodology

OAAS performed the audit using the following methods:

- Interviewed key DEH personnel regarding the VCP's assessment process and its various components.
- Reviewed Board of Supervisors resolutions and minute orders to confirm oversight and public presentation.
- Verified the existence and public availability of the annual Engineer's Report for FY 2019-20 and noted any changes or updates made since the most recent audit was performed.
- Tested a sample of expenditures for compliance with voter-approved spending requirements.
- Reviewed grants awarded to third parties through the Vector Habitat Remediation Program for compliance with program award procedures.
- Assessed departmental policies and procedures governing the collection, budgeting, and spending of benefit assessment funds.

AUDIT RESULTS

Summary

In our opinion, there is reasonable assurance that the Mosquito, Vector and Disease Control Assessment funds are being used in accordance with ballot measure provisions approved by the voters.

Office of Audits & Advisory Services

Compliance

Reliability

Effectiveness

Accountability

Transparency

Efficiency

VALUE