

FMCA's New Plan for State Aid Distribution

The State Aid for mosquito control is generated by Waste Tire Fees that are provided to the Florida Solid Waste Management Trust Fund. The waste tire fees (\$2.16M annually) for mosquito control are transferred from Florida's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to Florida's Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) to manage under Florida Statutes Chapter 388 sections 261, 271, 281.

For the past several years, DACS proposed cutting state aid to mosquito control by 50%, and provide state aid to only those Florida mosquito control programs with budgets below \$1,000,000. DEP proposed a similar reduction, ultimately resulting in no state aid to mosquito control and eliminating the mosquito control research program. While these funds are considered pass-through and not part of DEP or DACS budgets, these agencies proposed these cuts when they were told to cut their own budgets, essentially giving up this funding as cuts to their own programs. The Florida Mosquito Control Association (FMCA), with the assistance of their lobbyist and through direct discussions with Florida Legislators during our Tallahassee Day visit, reversed the DACS and DEP proposals and all funds for state aid for mosquito control were provided for 2010 in the full amount.

One thing became painfully obvious during our discussions with Commissioner Bronson, DACS Staff and the Legislators during our Tallahassee Day discussions. We need to abandon the idea of status quo and rethink the distribution of State Aid among the 50+ participating programs with an eye toward the future. DACS and the state legislators strongly suggested that the current distribution plan for the State Aid monies be changed, and that without substantive changes, the entire allocation may very well be deemed unnecessary by the Legislature.

The FMCA, through several conference calls and much deliberation, proposes a re-distribution that contains a reduction in funding to all mosquito control programs along with a substantial realignment in the distribution of State Aid monies. This re-distribution will now also include funding of operational support to FMEL, PHEREC, and the FL Dept. of Health, Tampa Lab.

With this proposal, programs are divided into 3 tiers and all programs will see a reduction in aid with the largest decrease in funding seen at the Tier 1 level (a budget of > \$3 million), a sizeable but smaller reduction at the Tier 2 level (a budget of \$1 million - \$3 million), and minimal reduction at the Tier 3 level (a budget of < \$1 million). By all mosquito control programs taking a reduction in aid, the Florida mosquito control community is demonstrating the seriousness of the need for supporting research and for the continuation of the Tampa Lab's arbovirus testing program, while continuing to provide support to local programs.

This proposal will increase the funding for research from the current \$250,000 to \$400,000. This research has a potential benefit to all Florida programs and is recognized as an essential focus for the stakeholders. These research funds are still well below the \$500,000 of nearly a decade ago and needs future increases.

This proposal establishes operational support for FMEL and PHEREC mosquito research labs. The funds are not for buildings or facilities but operational expenses to enable the research. Such funds would be used to augment the current budget and be directed purely to benefit the Florida mosquito control community. It is important for the stakeholders who benefit from the mosquito research to demonstrate their support for maintaining the existing high-quality research and teaching activities.

This proposal establishes operational support for the Florida Department of Health, Tampa Lab which is vital since the state lab may lose more than \$120,000 in funds from CDC cuts. If testing were stopped, or even reduced, the missing data would likely create a scenario where local mosquito control officials might not be able to determine when a mosquito-borne disease threat is real. Understanding the risk of exposure to infected mosquitoes is one of the keys to preventing human disease.

This proposal increases the DACS administrative hold back from approximately \$64,000 to \$108,000 which is the maximum of 5% of the \$2.16 million per Florida Statutes Chapter 388.261(8). This allows for additional administrative support, including assistance with anticipated NPDES permitting requirements.

We presented this proposal for distribution of State Aid at the annual FMCA meeting in Duck Key, FL (including a presentation to the Commissioners who are very important to this process) and again in the Director's/Commissioner's Caucus at the Dodd Short Courses. Several good comments were received and additional feedback is welcomed. We encourage additional input as the FMCA continues to discuss and revise this proposal. It will ultimately be presented to Commissioner Adam Putnam for review and the FL Legislators during our Tallahassee Day's visit on April 5, 2011.

As the State struggles with budget shortfalls, redistributing the funds to the infrastructure that supports mosquito control demonstrates the mosquito control community's commitment to protecting public health in a responsible and cost effective manner. We can no longer accept status quo and all programs cannot view this funding as an entitlement. We need to go to our legislators with a more effective message to communicate the needs of the stakeholders for the future.

If you have any comments or concerns to express, please send them to either:

Dennis Moore - FMCA Legislative Co-Chair, dmoore@pascomosquito.org
Doug Carlson - FMCA Legislative Co-Chair, doug.carlson@irmosquito2.org
Roxanne Connelly – FMCA President, crr@ufl.edu