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July 29, 2004

Honorable Clifford R. Anderson, III Presiding Judge, Santa Barbara County Superior Court P.O. Box 21107 Santa Barbara, CA 93121-1107

RE: RESPONSE TO THE SANTA BARBARA COUNTY GRAND JURY

REPORT ON THE SANTA BARBARA COASTAL VECTOR

CONTROL DISTRICT AND WEST NILE VIRUS

The purpose of this letter is to transmit the City of Santa Maria's formal response to subject report dated June 1, 2004. According to Penal Code Section 933, the City has 60 days to reply to the Grand Jury Report. This letter is intended to satisfy that reporting requirement.

The Grand Jury Report made one finding and one recommendation regarding the Vector Control District and West Nile Virus as it pertains to Santa Maria. The following is the City's formal response to the finding:

## RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION REGARDING VECTOR CONTROL

FINDING 2: Cities in the North County have chosen to remain independent, relying on their own departments to face any health hazard. They do not see West Nile Virus as a threat.

CITY RESPONSE: We disagree partially with the finding. We agree that Cities in the North County have chosen to remain independent; however, we disagree that we do not see West Nile Virus as a threat. We perceive the approach of West Nile Virus as a threat in the North County but as a lesser threat here than in urban areas such as the South Coast, for the same reasons contained in the Grand Jury Report.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Before any summer outbreak, the City needs to reassure its citizens that it has a mechanism in place to safeguard the public welfare, and monitor and control disease-carrying vectors, even on private properties.

CITY RESPONSE: The recommendation requires further analysis as it is the responsibility of public health agencies to educate the public about health concerns. The City stands ready to assist in this regard. The City's primary services include police and fire protection, and we strive to provide safe roads, sidewalks, and intersections.

There have been no reported cases of West Nile Virus on the Central Coast this year. To our north, San Luis Obispo County monitors a flock of sentinel chickens with testing every two weeks. To our south, a similar testing process is conducted. That being said, staff from our Recreation and Parks Department as well as our Fire Department are aware of the West Nile Virus, and we have attended training and obtained training material specific to this disease. The City will also educate the public by making pamphlets on prevention and control available to the public upon request.

Staff continues to keep bodies of water in City parks moving to discourage mosquito larvae, and are watching for signs of the disease such as dead birds, which are indicators of the West Nile Virus. This year, the City will contract with a private vector control service – to treat nuisance runoff water at a park site near the area known as Bradley Lakes.

In the past, the City has developed an emergency response policy for vector control type issues, such as Africanized bees and has responded to bee complaints. In the event that a mosquito-borne disease outbreak occurs, Santa Maria will utilize the California Department of Health Services, Operational Plan for Emergency Response to Mosquito-Borne Disease Outbreaks as our guide, in addition to calling upon other appropriate agencies for assistance.

The City of Santa Maria welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury Report.

LARRY LAVAGNINO

Mayor

LLGrandJuryResponse