



**Greater Los Angeles County  
Vector Control District**  
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# NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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## **Aerial Assault on Midge Flies in Rio Hondo Spreading Basins and San Gabriel River**

On Friday, April 22, 2005, the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District (GLACVCD) will be suppressing the larval stage of midge flies by aerially applying granules via helicopter into the spreading basins along the Rio Hondo River, located in the city of Pico Rivera, and bordering the city of Montebello. Portions of the San Gabriel River will also be treated. These small, non-biting flies are breeding and emanating from the spreading basins, which are full of water due to the above normal rainfall, causing midges to swarm neighborhoods and creating a nuisance problem for local residents and businesses.

The aerial application of Dimilin sand granules will commence at 7:00 a.m. and take approximately two hours to treat over 257-acres of spreading basins between Slauson and Whittier Blvd in Pico Rivera, and 69-acres of the San Gabriel River between Slauson and Florence Ave. Residential areas will not be treated or effected by the application, since Dimilin, an EPA approved insect growth regulator, is applied only in water at a rate of 6.4-16 ozs. per surface acre of water. The granules are composed of coarse sand, oil, hysil, and the active ingredient Dimilin, which will not drift, or leave a residue. This treatment will not have an effect on adult midge flies and will take approximately two-weeks for a noticeable reduction in the midge population. Any mosquito larvae in the treated water will also be reduced, as an added benefit. The District is anticipating a 70-90% decrease in the midge population after treatment.

Because of the extent of the problem, this is the first time GLACVCD will make an aerial application to control midge flies. In normal rainfall years, the District works collaboratively with the Los Angeles County Public Works Department to prevent midge flies by letting water percolation basins dry out for 10 days before flooding them again. Because of the abundance of rainfall this year, routine cyclic drying and filling of the basins is not possible.

Midge flies inhabit sources such as spreading basins, reservoirs, lakes, and flood control channels because they need water and mud to complete their life cycles. Most people confuse midges with mosquitoes because they are similar in size and general appearance. The major distinguishing characteristic is that mosquitoes have a needle-like piercing mouthpart called a proboscis, while midges do not, and therefore do not bite or transmit disease, however, they have been documented as the cause of allergies in people exposed to massive swarms.

Nuisance swarms usually emerge at sunset and may create stressful conditions for residents by disrupting outdoor activities such as barbecues. These large swarms can cause discomfort and irritation by entering

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the eyes, ears, nose and mouth and create economic damage by contaminating manufactured food and other commercial products in businesses nearby. Adults may fly onto newly painted surfaces and become stuck, defacing walls, ceilings, curtains, etc. During the day, midges can be found resting on cars, screen doors, walls, porches, bushes, and other vegetation. Control of adult midges is not an effective or practical approach to reduce populations.

GLACVCD offers some tips on how to alleviate nuisance midges:

- Reduce overall light use during the evening by using less powerful bulbs
- Use yellow light bulbs in outdoor fixtures; yellow is less attractive to midges
- Delay turning lights on as long as possible after sunset
- Keep doors closed and windows tightly screened to prevent midges from entering the home
- Avoid using zap traps or other electrical traps, which are virtually ineffective.