

Insects

# Mosquito-fight plans advance

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5-5-93

SANTA CRUZ — The county is just about ready to fight its own war against mosquitoes.

Fed up with difficulties linking up with a North Salinas mosquito abatement district, the Board of Supervisors unanimously agreed Tuesday to hold a public hearing on setting up a county service area to pay for control efforts. The meeting is set for 10:45 a.m. June 22.

"We're way past doing anything this year," said Board Chairman Ray Belgard, who represents the

Watsonville area, which along with Aptos is in its second year of a major mosquito problem. "And if we don't do something quick we won't have the money to do anything next year."

Belgard gracefully gave in to what North Coast Supervisor Gary Patton had suggested unsuccessfully in January: a county service area.

"I think I would be willing to go ahead and follow our esteemed supervisor's recommendation," he said.

The North Salinas Valley Mosquito Abatement District made

promises that sounded good, Belgard said, but did not follow through.

The district refused to include Aptos in the potential area it would serve, he said, and also asked for a share of county and city property taxes. The property tax soured interest from the city of Watsonville, which may be willing to overcome its initial reluctance to join a countywide effort.

Supervisors directed staff to try one more time to get the Aptos area included in the Salinas district. If not, supervisors said, it's time for the county to go its own way.