

## Board of Health Letter to All Island Selectmen

The Island's Boards of Health Are Prepared to Lead an Island-Wide Effort to Reduce the Incidence and Severity of On-Island Tick-Borne Illnesses

The Island's Boards of Health are collectively prepared to develop a Recommended Plan detailing how best to mitigate the on-Island disease burden from tick-borne diseases. The Boards are coming together on this as these diseases threaten all of us, recognize no town borders and can only be mitigated in a coordinated, Island-wide manner, one that leaves no disease sanctuary. The Boards of Health believe this to be an important public health issue and are prepared to lead the endeavor from recommendation development through implementation.

We are requesting upfront support of all Island Selectmen for two principal reasons. First, the final recommendations will only have value if they can be reviewed, debated, modified and ultimately implemented. As such, the Boards of Health are proposing that the final recommendations be reviewed in a process that is jointly managed by the Boards of Health and by the Selectmen. Your support of the attached resolution charges the Boards of Health with the necessary tasks and lays the foundation for the subsequent consensus building and implementation processes.

Second, federal funds from the CDC and NIH may be helpful to the roll out and implementation of these recommendations. Presently, while islands such as Block Island and Nantucket are eligible and have sought CDC funding specific to on-island Lyme disease eradication programs, our Island cannot compete for them as the CDC requires that eradication programs be led by an Island-wide body that is either appointed by the Selectmen, or elected. Your support of the attached resolution would enable the Boards of Health to be that Island-wide body and to seek outside federal funding in support of any final, agreed plan. A second round of CDC funding requests is expected in two years.

To advance the program the Boards of Health will also be seeking funds this year from the Martha's Vineyard Community Health Initiative (MVCHI). The MVCHI funds, provided through Martha's Vineyard Hospital, are available for periods of up to 5 years and in annual amounts of up to \$60,000. Islanders have identified Lyme disease as one of the Island's significant, preventable, unmet health needs. The Board of Health grant request will seek to consolidate and build upon a range of already existing on-Island and off-Island data and recommendations. Specifically, the grant program will:

- Incorporate, and as necessary modify, the report of the Nantucket Tick-Borne Disease Committee to the Nantucket Selectmen, dated December 13, 2009; Dr. Sam Telford III of Tufts, who served on the Nantucket Committee, will be working as well with the Island Boards of Health.
- Incorporate the on-Island data of Mr. David Simser of the Barnstable County Cooperative Extension, who has for the last 4 years worked on our Island to measure the effects of the USDA's 4-poster bait stations on deer-tick census
- Collect a range of baseline data on the Island's deer tick and deer populations, and on Islander's Lyme disease incidence and prevalence rates. The latter work on actual disease rates will be coordinated with and gathered from the Wampanoag Tribe and Martha's Vineyard Hospital, both of whom have been active in disease monitoring.
- Collect Lyme antibody data on a sample of current Elizabeth Island residents and vacationers to compare with corresponding data collected in 1987 when their local deer census numbers were more than 5 times higher.
- Explore the current status, suitability and availability of the Lyme disease vaccine previously marketed by GlaxoSmithKline.
- Explore the potential of using Chappaquiddick as a pilot island to more economically field test the various recommendations.
- Enhance Islander communications around strategies for disease avoidance and the importance of early disease recognition and treatment. This work will be coordinated through the Martha's Vineyard Lyme Disease Association and the Martha's Vineyard Hospital.

The above work will take two, possibly three years, depending on the potential and advisability of doing a Chappaquiddick pilot. Most importantly however, the MVCHI funds would support the first two to three years of an Island-wide implementation program, with the exact start date dependent principally on whether, and hopefully when, an all-Island consensus is obtained.

In summary, the Island Boards of Health are proposing to bring together data and efforts already under way from a variety of sources, to supplement this with new data and new efforts as necessary, and to coalesce this collected work into a coordinated set of recommendations, and ultimately actions. Islanders have long seen this to be essential. Tick-borne illnesses have too long burdened our Island and are preventable. With your support of the attached resolution, the Island Boards of Health are prepared to treat tick-borne illnesses as an important public health issue and to take the lead in addressing it.

Harold Zadek  
Edgartown BofH

West Tisbury BoH

Oak Bluffs BoH

Herb Custer  
Tisbury BoH

Chilmark BoH

Acquinnah BoH

## Board of Selectmen Resolution

It is resolved that the (town) Board of Selectmen encourage the (town) Board of Health to work together with the other Island Boards of Health to reduce the incidence and severity of on-Island tick-borne illnesses. Further resolved, that the Selectmen are prepared to conduct joint meetings with the (town) Board of Health in an effort to better gain town consensus around the Recommended Plan. It is understood that the Recommended Plan is expected on or before December 31, 2012, with a targeted implementation to commence on or before January 1, 2014, pending approval.

Resolution approved by Boards of Selectmen in the towns of Edgartown, Tisbury, Aquinnah, and West Tisbury; received favorably by Chilmark Selectmen and on the agenda for a vote at their November 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

