

stagnant pools were identified on the flyover. Many of those will be filled with mosquito fish.

To deploy the fish, communities are turning to workers like Ms. Cabada,

A significant threat to public health can be resolved through the use of a biological intervention. Learn more about the fish that eats mosquito larvae to reduce the threat of the west Nile virus. WSJ's Michael Corkery reports. (May 8)

a former Navy sailor. She has raised pet fish since she was a girl and keeps a 55-gallon aquarium at home along with her five love birds, two dogs, two pet pigeons and a rooster. Many mornings, she collects hundreds of fish, housed in massive bubbling tanks at mosquito-control headquarters, and transports them to pools and other water sources in a cooler in the back of her pickup truck. In the sweltering heat, the fish ride up front.

"They're my buddies for the day," Ms. Cabada says.

After Hurricane Katrina

The fish have been used to keep mosquito populations down for many decades by farmers and environmental crews who stock them in cattle ponds, irrigation ditches and decorative ponds. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, mosquito fish were stocked in the thousands of swimming pools abandoned around New Orleans in the storm.



Josefa Cabada

Native to the Gulf Coast states, the mosquito fish have mouths shaped to slurp larvae off the water's surface like noodles. The females can grow up to 3 inches long, and reproduce quickly. Technicians in Contra Costa typically release about 150 fish into each pool. Within weeks, the pools teem with a thousand of the scaly, gray predators.

When Ms. Cabada released fish into a pool behind a vacant home one recent day, they darted and dove through the water, which was the color of herbal tea. "It comforts you just to see them swimming around," she says.

Located along the delta where the Sacramento River meets the salt waters of the San Francisco Bay area, Contra Costa County's warm climate makes for prime mosquito country. The area is also struggling with foreclosures. Default notices more than doubled to 4,718 in the first quarter from the previous