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Zika Action Plan Underway in Putnam:
Health Officials and Towns Plan Distribution of “Mosquito-Control” Kits

BREWSTER, NY— Officials from the Putnam County Department of Health met with town supervisors in Carmel, Southeast, Putnam Valley and Patterson this week to discuss coordinated efforts for enhancing mosquito education and control. The health department will be providing the towns with “mosquito-control kits,” complete with instructions on removing standing water, mosquito larvicide tablets called “dunks,” and mosquito repellants. These free kits will be available to residents through their towns upon request beginning in early summer, as long as supplies last. Meetings with remaining towns are being scheduled for later this month. Educational presentations are planned for televised Town Board meetings so residents can tune in.

“Mosquito control efforts are only as successful as our public outreach and education,” says Putnam County Executive Mary Ellen Odell. “I am pleased our health department and towns are working together to coordinate messages to home owners. Removing mosquito breeding sites around their homes by eliminating water is our first and our best line of defense. Avoiding bites is number two.”

Interim Health Commissioner Michael Nesheiwat, M.D., has been providing ongoing guidance to local healthcare providers on Zika virus transmission and the importance of travel restrictions for pregnant women. “Our health care providers are well informed and are considering Zika virus in diagnosis of patients who have traveled to the affected areas,” Dr. Nesheiwat says. “Although we have not yet had a

case of local transmission, we are remaining diligent in efforts to decrease this chance through stepped up surveillance and ongoing education.”

Health department nurses have been responding to calls from concerned residents, who have travelled or who may be pregnant, and coordinating lab testing with their healthcare providers.

Environmental health staff at the health department have also been tracking mosquito activities to watch the numbers and types of mosquitoes breeding in the area. Currently no mosquito species known to carry Zika virus have been found in Putnam this year.

Still, mosquito surveillance and control professionals can only do so much. The cornerstone of any successful mosquito control program is a well-informed public. Information distribution has begun with outreach through traditional, website and social media channels, as well as in-person education to community groups and at health fairs. To request a speaker for a community gathering, please call the health education unit at 808-1390. A schedule of the televised Town Board meetings will be posted on the Health Department’s website when available.

The Health Department’s mission is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit the PCDOH website at www.putnamcountyny.com/health or connect on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

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