



October 19th, 2020

Re: Board of Supervisor Meeting 10/20/2020 Agenda Item 5c

Dear Honorable Board of Supervisors,

After attending the Board Meeting on 10-6-2020, CCAG was very disappointed that the Board initiated a vote to implement the hemp pilot program. We **strongly oppose** the launch of this program for many reasons, especially when the existence of even 5 hemp cultivators may jeopardize over 1,000 legal cannabis operators in our county. In previous memos written to this board, CCAG has raised many important issues to consider. We must reiterate: there are serious impacts that the Board must seriously evaluate before allowing a hemp pilot program to co-exist with our current cannabis program, which we do not feel the Board has fully analyzed at this time. Mendocino County should not gamble with the welfare and livelihoods of so many legal cannabis operators, who have already invested so much to participate in our cannabis program, with the irresponsible risks of a hemp pilot program.

Our concerns are outlined below:

1. Pollination

How can the County ensure that each hemp applicant adheres to using female clones? How will the inspectors enforce this requirement? What consequences will violators face?

2. Wind drift

Pesticide use requirements are very strict for cannabis producers and do not allow for the use of traditional pesticide products due to health and safety reasons for consumers. Hemp, though it will be used for CBD production and consumed similarly to cannabis, does not have the same requirements and can be sprayed with all manner of chemicals. Neighboring, compliant cannabis farms will still be greatly impacted despite their adherence to regulations, due to wind drift. This risk should not be taken lightly.

3. Pests

Cannabis farms across Mendocino County are experiencing a rise in pests such as the Hemp Russet Mite, Broad Mites and the new Hemp Bhang Aphid. The allowance of hemp will only create more populations of these types of mites affecting the entire County.

4. Hermaphrodite tendencies

Even with the use of female clones, no one can say with 100% certainty that clones do not express hermaphrodite tendencies. If a plant experiences stress, the

probability rises. ¹Studies in Morocco show conclusive evidence that hemp pollen has travelled a distance of 30+ miles. This can cause serious harm to neighboring cannabis farms. The reality that female clones can produce pollen should be reason enough to not allow a hemp program in our County.

5. No testing standards

Since hemp is classified as an Agricultural product, regulations allow for hemp cultivators to use traditional agricultural methods, including the use of pesticides that California regulations do not allow in cannabis production. The lack of strict pesticide testing for hemp will impact compliant, legal cannabis farms due to wind drift (as outlined above).

6. Devaluing cannabis CBD products

Allowing hemp production for CBD will devalue high CBD and CBG cultivars that are the backbone for sales of many small farms. Hemp and trim disilite formulates a 1:1 for pennies on the dollar.

7. Inspections

How will Mendocino County conduct inspections on hemp farms with an unlimited plant canopy since no cap has been defined in the proposed pilot program? Does the County have adequate experienced staff to monitor and maintain a hemp program? The pilot program states that:

“... an applicant will be responsible for obtaining and submitting to the Agricultural Commissioner a laboratory test report indicating the THC levels of the hemp as required by law, rule or regulation prior to harvest”

The County inspector should be responsible with taking the sample from the farm, not the other way around. Commercial cannabis regulations require that licensed testing laboratories conduct sample testing from cannabis farms to prevent skewed results. The County should mirror this type of regulation.

Round Valley is approximately 4.2 miles from East to West and 5.13 miles North to South. According to Anndrea Hermann², an international hemp expert, a safe starting distance between cannabis and hemp plants is 10 miles. “There is no scientific backing to guarantee that distance, but it is a safe starting point.” Our valley would not be able to meet a 10 mile buffer zone based on this recommendation. Therefore, CCAG will be in full pursuit of applying for an **OPT OUT** in Round Valley and surrounding hillsides to ban hemp cultivation in our community if adopted.

The California State Water Resources Control Board regulations state:

¹ Maintenance of Cannabis germplasm in the Vavilov Research Institute Gene Bank – Journal of the International Hemp Association 4(1): 17-21. All-Russian Research Institute of Plant Industry, St. Petersburg, Russia <http://www.internationalhempassociation.org/jiha/jiha4108.html>

² <https://www.thecannabist.co/2015/06/18/safe-distance-hemp-marijuana-pollination/33130/>

*“cannabis cultivators shall not cultivate cannabis on tribal lands or within 600 feet of tribal lands without the express written permission of the governing body of the affected tribe or from a person deputized by the governing body of the affected tribe to authorize cannabis cultivation on tribal lands”*³

We strongly advise the method and scope of required setbacks should also apply to the hemp pilot program as a means to respect and protect tribal water rights in Round Valley and surrounding tribal communities within Mendocino County.

Finally, it behooves the Board to take note of a recent article from *Tips from a Minnesota Farmer On Growing Hemp*⁴, about a hemp farmer in Minnesota. The farmer used roughly ½ to 1 gallon of water per plant per day and more at flowering time. The farmer grew 6 acres of hemp which totaled 6,150 plants, **1,025 plants per acre**. The plants were spaced 51 inches apart in their rows, and there was 10 feet between the rows. With 1 gallon of water per plant, a total of **6,150 gallons** of water was used PER DAY for a 6 acre operation. How does the Board justify ignoring the environmental impact of hemp and not setting any type of cap on canopy?

Should the Board implement a hemp program, we strongly urge the County to require every hemp producer to be bonded in order to ensure some type of accountability should their crop cause catastrophic damage to neighboring legal cannabis farms.

Additionally, there must be a specific hemp tax associated with this program, as well as a permit fee structure that can support the needed inspections from County Staff and departments already stretched thin by a-yet-to-be-fully realized initial cannabis cultivation program.

We are in strong opposition to a hemp pilot program; however, if a vote to adopt this program does go forward, CCAG recommends that the hemp pilot program **only be allowed in Districts 1, 2 and 4** since there is support for it by the Supervisors of those specific districts.

Ultimately, we want the Board to hear us when we say: to cast a vote in favor of a hemp pilot program at this time is absolutely irresponsible and our community will not stand for it. We will take every measure needed to ensure protection to our legacy operators and will fight for a hemp ban in Round Valley if this Pilot Program is adopted.

Sincerely,

Monique Ramirez
on behalf of the Covelo Cannabis Advocacy Group

³ www.waterboards.ca.gov/adopted_orders/resolutions

⁴ <https://www.agriculture.com/crops/hemp/tips-from-farmers-on-growing-hemp>