

CHAPTER 20.242 - CANNABIS CULTIVATION SITES

Sec. 20.242.010 - Intent.

This chapter 20.242 ("Chapter") is intended to provide land use regulations for the County of Mendocino where cannabis may be cultivated, subject to the limitations established of this chapter and the provisions of Mendocino County Code Chapter 10A.17, the Mendocino Cannabis Cultivation Ordinance (MCCO). The objective of this Chapter is to allow the cultivation of cannabis in locations that are consistent with the intent of the base zoning district and to help ensure that its cultivation and related activities will not create adverse impacts to the public health, safety, and welfare of the residents of the County of Mendocino.

([Ord. No. 4381, § 2, 4-4-2017](#) ; [Ord. No. 4408, § 16, 4-28-2018](#))

Sec. 20.242.020 - Application.

The cultivation of cannabis is prohibited in all zoning districts in Mendocino County, except as allowed by this Chapter or by Chapter 10A.17.

([Ord. No. 4381, § 2, 4-4-2017](#) ; [Ord. No. 4408, § 17, 4-28-2018](#))

Sec. 20.242.030 - Definitions.

Unless otherwise defined in this Chapter, the terms and phrases used herein shall have the same definitions as provided in Chapter 10A.17, or as provided in this Title 20.

([Ord. No. 4381, § 2, 4-4-2017](#))

Sec. 20.242.040 - Existing Cannabis Cultivation Sites.

- (A) Referrals of applications to the Department for review related to existing cultivation sites shall include the Agriculture Commissioner's determination that the cultivation site existed prior to January 1, 2016, unless the Agricultural Commissioner requests the assistance of the Department in making this determination as part of the referral to the Department.
- (B) Cultivation sites, in conformance with the MCCO, may be allowed on a legal parcel with an approved Zoning Clearance, Administrative Permit or Minor Use Permit as required for the zoning district in which the cultivation site is located and as listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Zoning Permit Requirement for Existing Cannabis Cultivation by Zoning District and Cannabis Cultivation Ordinance Permit Type

MCCO Permit Type		C Sm Outdoor	C-A Sm Indoor, Artificial Light		C-B Sm, Mixed Light	1 Med Outdoor	1-A Med Indoor, Artificial Light	1-B Med Mixed Light	2 Lg Outdoor	2-A Lg Indoor, Artificial Light	2-B Lg Mixed Light	4 Nursery
Min Parcel Area (ac)		NA	NA		NA	5	5	5	10	10	10	10
Cultivation Area Limit (sf)		2,500	500	501 — 2,500	2,500	2,501 — 5,000	2,501 — 5,000	2,501 — 5,000	5,001 — 10,000	5,001 — 10,000	5,001 — 10,000	22,000
Zoning District	RR 5*	ZC	AP	UP	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	—	—	—	—
	RR 10	ZC	AP	UP	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC
	AG	ZC	AP	UP	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC
	UR	ZC	AP	UP	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC
	RL	ZC	AP	UP	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC
	FL***	ZC	AP	UP	ZC	AP	—	AP	AP	—	AP	AP
	TPZ***	ZC	AP	UP	ZC	AP	—	AP	AP	—	AP	AP
	I1**	ZC	ZC	ZC	ZC	ZC	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC	ZC
	I2**	ZC	ZC	ZC	ZC	ZC	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC	ZC
	PI**	ZC	ZC	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC	ZC

— = Not Allowed, ZC = Zoning Clearance, AP = Administrative Permit, UP = Minor Use Permit

* Parcels in the RR-5 zoning district must have a minimum parcel size of five (5) acres.

** Parcels in Industrial zoning districts are not subject to a minimum parcel area.

*** Existing cultivation sites in the FL and TPZ zoning districts that were previously enrolled in a permit program pursuant to the County's Chapter 9.31 shall be required to obtain a zoning clearance unless the applicant seeks to expand beyond the size previously cultivated under such permit program.

(C) An existing cultivation site located in a zoning district not listed in Table 1 of this section may continue, but shall not be expanded or enlarged, subject the following planning permit and approval requirements.

(1) Planning Permit Requirements:

(a) Outdoor Cultivation (pursuant to a MCCO Type C Permit) not exceeding two thousand five hundred (2,500) requires an approved Zoning Clearance.

- (b) Indoor Artificial Light Cultivation (pursuant to a MCCO Type C-A Permit) not exceeding five hundred (500) square feet requires an approved Administrative Permit.
- (c) Indoor Artificial Light Cultivation (pursuant to a MCCO Type C-A Permit) between five hundred one (501) and two thousand five hundred (2,500) square feet requires an approved Minor Use Permit.
- (d) Mixed Light Cultivation (pursuant to a MCCO C-B Permit) not exceeding two thousand five hundred (2,500) square feet requires an approved Zoning Clearance.
 - (i) Any future lapse or revocation of the MCCO permit will extinguish the permittee's ability to obtain a future permit from the Department to continue or resume an existing cultivation site that is not within a zoning district listed in Table 1 of this section.
- (D) Transferability of Permits. Permits issued pursuant to this Section shall not be transferable to another person, except that the permittee may transfer the permit to a spouse/domestic partner, child, parent, or, for estate planning purposes, to a trust in which the permittee serves as a trustee, which shall not be deemed a change in ownership for purposes of this Chapter.

([Ord. No. 4381, § 2, 4-4-2017](#) ; [Ord. No. 4408, § 18, 4-28-2018](#))

Sec. 20.242.050 - New Cannabis Cultivation Sites Located in Industrial Zoning Districts.

Establishment of a new cannabis cultivation site in the I1 (Light Industrial), I2 (General Industrial), and Pinoleville (PI) zoning districts, for Type 1A and 2A MCCO permits, issued on or after January 1, 2018 may be permitted subject to the requirements of Section 20.242.060.

([Ord. No. 4381, § 2, 4-4-2017](#) ; [Ord. No. 4408, § 19, 4-28-2018](#))

Sec. 20.242.060 - New Cannabis Cultivation Sites.

- (A) Except as provided in Section 20.242.050, on or after January 1, 2020, new cannabis cultivation sites may be permitted in accordance with this section.
- (B) All new cannabis cultivation sites shall be consistent with the General Limitations on Cultivation of Cannabis, Section 10A.17.040; provided, however, that an applicant may seek a reduction in the setback requirements as stated in paragraph (D) of this section.
- (C) Cultivation sites, operated in conformance with the MCCO, may be allowed on a legal parcel with an approved Zoning Clearance, Administrative Permit or Minor Use Permit, as required for the zoning district in which the cultivation site is located and listed in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Zoning Permit Requirement for New Cannabis Cultivation by Zoning District and Cannabis
Cultivation Ordinance Permit Type

MCCO Permit Type		C Sm Outdoor	C-A Sm Indoor, Artificial Light		C-B Sm Mixed Light	1 Med Outdoor	1-A Med Indoor, Artificial Light	1-B Med Mixed Light	2 Lg Outdoor	2-A Lg Indoor, Artificial Light	2-B Lg Mixed Light	4 Nursery
Min Parcel Area (ac)		2	2		2	5	5	5	10	10	10	10
Cultivation Area Limit (sf)		2,500	500	501 — 2,500	2,500	2,501 — 5,000	2,501 — 5,000	2,501 — 5,000	5,001 — 10,000	5,001 — 10,000	5,001 — 10,000	22,000
Zoning District	RR 5*	ZC	AP	UP	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	—	—	—	—
	RR 10	ZC	AP	UP	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC
	AG	ZC	AP	UP	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC
	UR	ZC	AP	UP	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC
	I1**	ZC	ZC	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC	ZC
	I2**	ZC	ZC	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC	ZC
	PI**	ZC	ZC	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC	—	ZC	ZC	ZC

— = Not Allowed, ZC = Zoning Clearance, AP = Administrative Permit, UP = Minor Use Permit

* Parcels in the RR-5 zoning district must have a minimum parcel size of five (5) acres.

** Parcels in Industrial zoning districts are not subject to a minimum parcel area.

- (D) **Setback Reduction.** A reduction in the setback from a legal parcel line required by Section 10A.17.040 may be allowed with an Administrative Permit, approved according to Section 20.242.070(C), provided that the approved setback reduction is fifty (50) feet or greater from an adjoining property under separate ownership or access easement, whichever is most restrictive and the location of the cannabis cultivation site continues to comply with the required setback from an occupied legal residential structure.

([Ord. No. 4381, § 2, 4-4-2017](#) ; [Ord. No. 4408, § 20, 4-28-2018](#))

Sec. 20.242.070 - Planning approval required to cultivate cannabis.

- (A) **Planning Approval Procedure.** Each proposed cannabis cultivation site is subject to one (1) of the following planning review processes that correspond to the applicable zoning district and Chapter 10A.17 permit as specified by Table 1 or Table 2 in this Chapter.

The Agricultural Commissioner's Office shall refer applications for cultivation permits pursuant to Chapter 10A.17 to the Department, which shall review the application to determine which of the following processes applies. If the application needs only a Zoning Clearance, the Department will provide a zoning clearance approval to the

Agricultural Commissioner's Office. If the application requires either an Administrative Permit or a Minor Use Permit, the Department will notify the Agricultural Commissioner's Office and the applicant that planning approval is required.

- (B) Zoning Clearance. The Department shall review the MCCO permit application to confirm the cannabis cultivation site is allowed in zoning district, subject to the applicable requirements of this chapter, and confirm the legal parcel on which the cultivation site is located. The Department shall additionally provide any information as requested by the Agricultural Commissioner's Office to confirm compliance with any of the provisions of Chapter 10A.17.
- (C) Administrative Permit. In accordance with the Administrative Permit review procedure listed in Chapter 20.192, the Zoning Administrator shall approve, conditionally approve or deny an Administrative Permit for cannabis cultivation sites based on the following special findings.
 - (1) The cannabis cultivation site is allowed in the zoning district and it is in compliance with the provisions of Chapter 10A.17.
 - (2) There is no other environmentally superior cultivation site located on the same parcel; the location and operation of the cannabis cultivation site will, to the maximum extent feasible, avoid or minimize its impact on environmentally sensitive areas including hillsides exceeding fifteen (15) percent, prime soil, oak woodland, and timber resources.
 - (3) The cannabis cultivation will avoid or minimize odor and light impact on residential uses.
 - (4) For any new cannabis cultivation site established after January 1, 2020 and that is not located in the AG (Agriculture) Zoning District, the submitted MCCO permit application contains evidence that demonstrates: (1) there is adequate water supply in the watershed and water rights to serve the cultivation site; (2) the cultivation site has received a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit from the Army Corps of Engineers or a Clean Water Act Section 401 permit from the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, as applicable, and a General Permit for Discharges of Storm Water from the State Water Resources Control Board.
 - (5) The Administrative Permit granted for the cannabis cultivation site shall be limited to a period not to exceed ten (10) years. The Administrative Permit shall expire at the end of this period unless it is renewed prior to the end of the 10-year period, or at any time the approved MCCO permit for the cultivation site expires or is revoked.
 - (6) An Administrative Permit may be applied for and granted for an exception to the dwelling unit requirement of Chapter 10A.17 for parcels in the Rural Residential, lot size ten (10) acres (R-R:L-10) zoning district with the additional finding that the applicant shall demonstrate that the cultivation site and any associated infrastructure (roads, buildings, water storage, etc.) does not preclude the development of the parcel with a residence in the future. For parcels that will need on-site sewage disposal systems to be developed, making this finding may

require the identification of a primary and reserve leach field to be identified in order to issue the Administrative Permit.

- (7) An Administrative Permit may be applied for and granted for an exception to the one thousand (1,000) foot setback requirement of a cannabis cultivation site as outlined in section 10A.17.040(B). Administrative permits may be approved, conditionally approved or denied for the reduction of the setback provided for in section 10A.17.040(A)(1) based on the findings of 20.242.070(C)(1), (C)(2) and (C)(3) and on the following special findings:
 - (i) That there be special circumstances applicable to the property involved, including size, shape, topography, location or surrounding;
 - (ii) That the granting of such reduction will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in such vicinity and zone in which the property is located; and
 - (iii) That the granting of such reduction will not adversely affect the General Plan.
- (D) Minor Use Permit. In accordance with the Use Permit review procedure listed in Chapter 20.196, the Zoning Administrator or the Planning Commission shall approve, conditionally approve, or deny a Minor Use Permit for a cannabis cultivation site based on findings in Section 20.196.020 and the following special findings:
 - (1) The proposed cannabis cultivation site is in compliance with the provisions of Chapter 10A.17.
 - (2) In cases where there is no other environmentally superior cultivation site located on the same parcel, the location and operation of the cannabis cultivation site will, to the maximum extent feasible, avoid or minimize its impact on environmentally sensitive areas including hillsides exceed fifteen (15) percent, prime soil, oak woodland, and timber resources.
 - (3) The proposed cannabis cultivation site will avoid or minimize odor and light impact on residential uses.
 - (4) For any new cannabis cultivation site established after January 1, 2020 and that is not located in the AG (Agriculture) Zoning District, the submitted MCCO permit application contains evidence that demonstrates: (1) there is adequate water supply in the watershed and water rights to serve the cultivation site; (2) the cultivation site has received a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit from the Army Corps of Engineers or a Clean Water Act Section 401 permit from the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, as applicable, and a General Permit for Discharges of Storm Water from the State Water Resources Control Board.
 - (5) The Use Permit granted for the cannabis cultivation site shall be limited to a period not to exceed ten (10) years. The Use Permit shall expire at the end of this period unless it is renewed prior to the end of [the] 10-year period, or at any time the approved MCCO permit for the cultivation site expires or is revoked.

([Ord. No. 4381, § 2, 4-4-2017](#); [Ord. No. 4408, § 21, 4-28-2018](#))