

July 20, 2020

From:

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To: Mendocino County Board of Supervisors

Regarding: Proposals to toss out the Mendocino Cannabis Cultivation Ordinance and allow the cultivation of cannabis on rangeland in Mendocino County

Dear Board Members and Staff,

It is my understanding that the Board may be asked to consider terminating the existing Cannabis Cultivation Ordinance and replacing it with a Use Permit process that would be less time consuming and result in an increase in cannabis production. These changes may include the recommendation to open County's rangeland zones to cannabis operations. **I strongly oppose approving such changes.**

I am from a ranching family that has lived in Mendocino County for almost 100 years. I understand the need and pressures to adopt county policies that support agricultural endeavors that might provide income for local farmers and broaden the County's economic base. Regulating the cultivation of cannabis in our county is challenging, but the Mendocino County General Plan and our Cannabis Cultivation Ordinance were adopted to act as a guide for such decisions. Large scale production of cannabis in rangeland is not compatible with the goals and policies set forth in the Resource Management Element of our General Plan and is explicitly prohibited in the Cannabis Cultivation Ordinance.

The Mendocino County General Plan goals and policies promote land uses and development practices that facilitate healthy watershed ecosystems and protect and enhance the long-term sustainability of our water resources. *Opening up additional rangeland for cannabis production will have a major impact on the availability of water for existing land use and for the sustainability of our already heavily impacted ecosystems.* This is in direct conflict with General Plan Policy RM – 14 which states that existing water uses shall have priority over new water uses, and Policy RM-17 that states that no development shall be allowed by the county beyond proof of the capability of the available water supply. *Water in Mendocino County is already over allocated and this has impacted the health of our streams and rivers for salmon and steelhead. Adding additional water demand higher up in our watersheds will only increase this problem.*

General Plan Policies RM-24, 25, and 26 protect the count's natural landscapes by restricting conversion and fragmentation of timberland, oak woodlands, farmlands, and other natural environments: prevent fragmentation and loss of our oak woodlands, forests, and wild lands and preserve the economic and ecological values and benefits; AND protect, use and manage the county's farmlands, forests, water, air, soils, energy, and other natural resources in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner. *Many large ranches in Mendocino County are composed of smaller legal parcels. Permitting widespread cannabis cultivation on rangeland parcels would provide an economic incentive to breakup these ranches and other large landholdings and lead to the very fragmentation and loss of ecological diversity and sustainability that our general plan works to prevent.*

I join many others to encourage you to take seriously your mandate to protect the plants, animals, soils, and water of our county to ensure that we have healthy ecosystems in our county for future generations.

Your time and effort to create, adopt, and enforce responsible cannabis cultivation guidelines is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Helen Magruder Menasian