

Jerry Tergis
34650 Mendocino Pass Road
Covelo CA
(707) 983-6511

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Dear Chair Haschak and Member of the Board,

I am a long time resident of Covelo in Mendocino County. It has come to my attention that Supervisor McCowen has proposed changes to the current Cannabis Regulations and I am extremely concerned. I believe that the current regulations, that were voted for by the residents of Mendocino County could work for our licensed cannabis growers and growers who are in the application process and for the environment, if they were enforced. The current regulations should stay in effect until every cannabis application has been processed.

I have been living on Range Land for the last 16 years. Over the last few years, I am witnessing and experiencing first hand the unregulated effects of cannabis growers practice of using and abusing the land. The land that is zoned as Range Land is typically very steep. I have watched as major excavations have been carved into steep hillsides to accommodate 10,000 sqft of green houses. Rarely are these excavations permitted or engineered and cause a tremendous amount of erosion. The green houses are covered with cheap plastic that degrades after one season of use and breaks down, contaminating the soil and water with toxic chemicals. Many sites are used for a year and then abandoned and littered.

There is often very little water available on Range Land. Growers are pumping out of creeks and rivers, draining our watershed. If they are not able to pump out of a natural water source, they are having water trucked in on a daily and sometimes multi-times per day from both legal and illegal water transporters. In addition to the water trucks, semi trucks transporting a phenomenal amount of soil and fertilizer are making deliveries from March through July. Imported soil and fertilizer impacts our native soils and the run off of nitrogen accumulates in our rivers, damaging the natural ecosystem. This is not only creating continuous traffic on our small country roads, but leads to dangerous driving conditions and is destroying our fragile road system.

I am distressed over the large population of transient workers who are coming to the area to work on illegal cannabis farms. The population quadruples over the growing season and with it brings crime, violence and now Covid-19. Unfortunately these people are still paid under the table which does not benefit our local economy or schools. They take their cash and spend it elsewhere. Harvest time has become down right dangerous with gun shots, kidnapping, murders and more. I have friends that are terrified by their new neighbors who are growing illegally.

I am not against the people who are applying for or have received their cannabis permits. I understand that it is a rigorous and costly process. I believe that it is unfair for those people that have worked and invested in the cannabis application permitting process to have the regulations changed now. The county supervisors have a duty to all the residents of Mendocino County to protect our environment and the sustainability of the cannabis industry. Mendocino County is a special and beautiful place. Zoning was put into place to protect it from inappropriate agricultural practices. We need our Supervisors to protect this land for future generations and not hand it over to the short term profit and greed of unregulated cannabis growers, but plan for a more sustainable future for us all. Please enforce the application process.

Respectfully,
Jerry Tergis