

Mary C. Waters
395 San Jacinta Dr.
Ukiah, CA 95482

Board of Supervisors
Mendocino County
Ukiah, California
Aug. 3, 2020

Dear Carmel Angelo and Members of the Board of Supervisors:

I want to thank each of you for your dedication to public service, and for the countless hours you spend grappling with complex issues.

I also want to acknowledge that the County finances have been severely strained because of the Covid pandemic. And so it makes sense to favor ideas that bring in more revenue. Repealing the cannabis ordinance and replacing it with a Use Permit process would enable large growers to establish and expand their businesses, bringing in quick revenue for the county.

However, recently, you have unanimously adopted a Climate Emergency Resolution. You have wisely agreed to incorporate the mitigation of climate change into your decision making processes.

Rangelands, now off limits to cannabis growers, are home to oak woodlands and oak savannahs. A single oak tree, as it grows, absorbs significant amounts of carbon dioxide from the air. In fact, oaks absorb and hold more CO₂ than any other species, keeping this molecule out of the air, where it contributes to heating up the planet.

Cut down an oak tree, and the CO₂ eventually all goes back into the air. The planet gets hotter, and we get more wildfires, more drought, more power-outages, and more threats to our coastal towns as sea-level rises.

Consistent with the Board's acknowledgement of a climate emergency, then, the Board must do everything in its power to protect our native oaks. Because without the strict environmental guidelines of the cannabis ordinance, it won't be just one oak tree that is cut down – it will be thousands. Oaks can grow in remote, steep, inaccessible areas, ideal for cannabis growers who want to protect their crops from theft. It's difficult enough now, even with the cannabis ordinance, for law enforcement to patrol all of Mendocino County. Repeal that ordinance, and there will be few if any constraints on practices that will accelerate global warming.

Consider, too, the chain saws, generators, wood stoves, and the steel blades of weed-eaters involved in cannabis growing. If climate change really is an emergency, as the Board has declared, why would the Board choose to amplify these situations, which put us all at risk for more wildfires?

I urge the Board to put aside the temptation of quick revenue for the strapped finances of the county and think about long-term effects. Perhaps it is best to delay voting on this crucial matter until it can be studied further. Perhaps there are other ways to encourage the much needed revenue for the county. Thank you for your creative thinking about the complexities of this issue.

Sincerely,
Mary C. Waters