

To: Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
re: Agenda Item 5B, Cannabis

Given the unfortunate track record of lawlessness and environmental damage to many properties in this county by the Cannabis industry and the limited enforcement capability of the county, I think it would be wise to retain the Cannabis Ordinance and to limit Cannabis expansion to Industrial or Commercial zones.

You may wish to consider having the applicant pay for the cost of the Sensitive Species Site Review. If an applicant cannot meet the review requirements then they should acquire an appropriate property that can. Our cannabis ordinance can be improved but it should not be abandoned. The will of the people is to protect our rangelands and provide environmental protections for our lands, including these grow sites.

Since the problems in the Covelo area are not abating, but rather spreading to other regions, like Third Gate in Willits, it does seem that the county is not able to control the spread of cartels. The increase in serious violence that we've seen is a worrisome trend that would only be intensified by an expansion of this industry into our rangelands.

Moving these cannabis grows into steep, remote land is also a recipe for more fires. Of the 24 parcels in the valley I live in, we have had 4 fires in recent years. So, that is 1 in every 8 parcels. These have all been stupid mistakes like burning garbage on a hillside in late October. The risk of fire is increased with the introduction of migrant labor and new residents that are unfamiliar with our climate, and when mistakes are made they can be catastrophic.

Farmers generally try to align their crops with the existing soil and climate conditions, but “industrial strength” cannabis growers don’t abide by these common-sense practices. They simply truck everything in. The problem of CO2 emissions changing our climate is only amplified by their unfortunate practice of trucking in all of their soil, often in plastic bags, and much of their water. Water trucks are running up and down the Willits Grade every day in the summer months now. This is damaging to our roads, it exacerbates our climate woes, and is difficult to monitor even if prohibited.

With only half of our normal rainfall and our water already over-allocated, it does not seem appropriate to greatly expand cannabis, which not only uses a LOT of water but also uses more fertilizer than any other crop. This fertilizer then chokes our rivers and streams with toxic, fish-killing, algae, and the problem of dead zones off our coastline is a growing one. And illegal water diversions will still be a problem, and they have been shown to have a significant impact on our water resources, as well. (*Asarian 2015)

It is argued that there are not enough Industrial and Commercial properties available, but there is also a limit to our underpinning resources. We *do* have limits to our policing, our code enforcement, our road funds, and our water resources. Recognizing these limitations when making development decisions will bring about the best outcome for all parties. Limiting cannabis grows to those areas with already existing infrastructure, will reduce the cost to the county, and increase the benefits. Encouraging law-abiding businesses that do not require an excessive amount of water will be a prudent course to follow in the challenging years of drought ahead of us.

Sincerely,
Sheila Jenkins