

Dear Mendocino County Board of Supervisors,

I am writing to express my concern about the proposed Cannabis Land Use Ordinance. I recognize that this is an incredibly complex issue and I don't claim to have the solutions. I appreciate your time and willingness to thoughtfully address the issues to find solutions that work for your diverse constituent base.

Words matter. First, I want to address a term I often hear casually thrown around and used for marketing purposes: "our heritage" as described when referring to some implied right to commercial cannabis cultivation. In the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "heritage" is defined 1- as property that descends to an heir or 2- something transmitted by or acquired from a predecessor. As a non-Native person that lives here, I want to acknowledge that I live on the unceded land of the Central Pomo people, on land stolen from our predecessors and their living descendants, in a state that is home to nearly 200 recognized tribal nations. To my understanding, the "heritage" of Mendocino County does not provide every resident a carte blanche birthright to commercial cannabis expansion or any other extractive land use. Our heritage is unequivocally bound in careful stewardship of our natural resources since time immemorial, until, more recently, colonizers showed up.

I have two primary concerns with the ordinance:

- 1- Any expansion of cannabis in Mendocino County should be preceded by a county-wide Environmental Impact Report
- 2- Expansion of cannabis into rangeland will cause irreparable environmental damage. We need to protect our rangeland.

A significant proportion of Mendocino County's rangeland is characterized as oak woodland. Oak woodland ecosystems are already under nearly unsustainable pressures between land use changes and habitat fragmentation, drought, wildfire suppression and resulting "mega-fires," poor oak recruitment, introduced pathogens and tree pests, competition, and climate change. University of California research shows that oak woodlands host the richest biological diversity of any major habitat in the state of California. More than 330 species of animals use oak woodland habitat for at least some part of the year. Despite the overwhelming amount of biodiversity hosted in oak woodland ecosystems, they still remain largely unprotected.

Land use changes are the ONE variable we have some control over. My understanding is that our local oak woodland ordinance remains in draft form which I interpret to mean that Mendocino County's oak woodland's and all the plants and animals they harbor are offered little to no protection beyond zoning. I oppose any cannabis expansion without an environmental impact report. Preserving the character, species composition, and ecosystem services of Mendocino's rangeland should be a number one priority for the new cannabis ordinance. I have grave concerns that the proposed cannabis land use ordinance and the 10% expansion does not meet those criteria in a meaningful way, and creates a dangerous precedent that will severely and irreversibly degrade our ecosystems.

Thank you,

Jennifer Brook Gamble