



Redwood Valley Municipal Advisory Council
PO Box 243 | Redwood Valley | CA 95470

April 14, 2021

Board of Supervisors
County of Mendocino

Dear Supervisors Gjerde, Haschak, McGourty, Mulheren and Williams:

We the members of the Redwood Valley Municipal Advisory Council have been closely following the County's cannabis policy proposals and decisions. Redwood Valley residents, businesses, farmers and even cannabis cultivators are outraged by what we are seeing happen here, and fearful about any expansion that could multiply the harms.

We understand that you just voted a few days ago to prioritize and fund enforcement of illegal and non-compliant cannabis activities and so we are writing now with the understanding that you will in fact make sure that happens with thoroughness and expediency, and we can move on to looking at Phase III in that light.

We also understand that if the Board is not successful in passing a Phase III ordinance before June 30, the state will require an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and site-specific CEQA for every cannabis cultivation location. We strongly request that an EIR be done *regardless* of state requirement. While the cost of conducting an EIR is high, the cost of environmental degradation and the resulting damage to our industries and the satisfaction of our citizens is astronomically higher.

We therefore focus now on the Phase III ordinance, and we specifically request that it accomplish the following:

1. No cultivation in hoop houses (with the possible exception of certain designated industrial zones). All cultivation must be sun-grown in the ground. No hoop houses means no light pollution, no generators, no plastic which deteriorates into micro-plastics that contaminate our precious farmlands and wildlife (and indeed our own bodies!) forever, no gravel and/or road base making our soils unfit for future farming. Prohibiting cultivation in hoop houses also removes from the equation the visual blight they have brought to our pastoral views. It strengthens our county's reputation as the capital of sustainable agriculture. It protects our ability to attract tourism. It makes it easier for law enforcement to see what is being grown. Those who want to grow three crops of cannabis a year using techniques that devastate the environment and the community will need to go elsewhere to do it.
2. No trucked in water for cannabis, period. Trucking water should not be allowed in the county at all except in the case of emergency for residents, farmers of food, or to save perennial crops. We face a terrible drought this year, and given climate change, we have to

understand that this is the new normal. Even with severe restrictions, there may not be enough water for homes. Redwood Valley County Water District has announced that they will turn off agricultural irrigation service on the day you will vote on Phase III. Wells are going dry and more are expected to do so. Vineyards and orchards that have stood for decades may be lost. Also, it is well known that a lot of trucked water is coming out of our neighbor's wells, or our fire hydrants, or our streams and rivers. Even if the source is legal, it is very likely impacting water resources in the area where it is drawn. Trucking water is very damaging to our roads and the environment, contributing to the very climate change that is causing our drought.

3. No plastic-covered fences. No chainlink or other wire fences which are known to trap, injure and kill wildlife and obstruct their movements. Fences must have 50 foot setbacks from roads and neighbors, and not obscure existing neighbors' views.
4. No destruction of existing perennial agriculture such as vineyards and orchards to replace it with cannabis. The value of these crops is spread over decades, sometimes even a century. A vineyard supports our wine industry and tourism industry. To tear it out for a "boom and bust" industry that will leave it within this decade would be the pinnacle of poor planning.
5. No cultivation in rangelands. The voters already said no to this in 2016 (Measure AF). Our rangelands are fragile, fire-prone, and critical to our fish and wildlife populations which are already depleted and threatened.
6. A maximum cannabis crop area of 10,000 square feet. If all goes well, we could consider expansion of the growing area in the near future.
7. We would like to see a fair and affordable path to legalization for small "family" farmers who commit to the most sustainable practices such as those embodied in independent third-party certification "Sun+Earth," which goes beyond organic into actually improving the soils and environment. The easiest way to do this may be to support these small farmers towards becoming certified by Sun+Earth and then requiring them to maintain certification (as well as complying with all county laws, of course). For these small, very sustainable growers, we would support a maximum canopy of 10,000sf on RR5 as well as RR10, UR and AG zones.

If you cannot incorporate these requests into the existing proposal, we urge you to vote no. You still have more than two months to craft an ordinance that meets the approval of the majority of your constituents.

Thank you very much for your careful attention to this urgent matter and the wishes of the citizens of Mendocino County.

Very Sincerely,

Redwood Valley Municipal Advisory Council Members: Dolly Riley (Chair), Jini Reynolds (Vice Chair), Katrina Frey (Treasurer), Christine Boyd, Sattie Clark, Patricia Yarbrough