

April 18, 2021

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors

Comments on Cannabis Land Ordinance, April 19, 2021

Mr. Chairman & Board Members,

I am writing to implore you not to approve any revision to the county's cannabis ordinances that would:

- remove or diminish environmental reviews, environmental restrictions, or inspections by county officials,
- open range land, as currently defined in the County's General Plan, or any new lands, to cannabis cultivation
- Or remove any current limits on number of plants, cultivation methods, hours of operation, or water sources.

The new ordinance you are considering would remove local official inspections and replace it with an unenforced and by default, ineffective self-certification process. This will lead to expanded use of rodenticides and pesticides, which will poison the area's wildlife either directly or secondarily kill predator and scavenger species, and pollute streams with poisonous runoff which will kill fish and other creatures living in riparian habitat.

The new ordinance will not only open vast new areas of rangeland to cultivation, it will remove or hugely increase any limitations on the maximum number of plants that can be grown on any one parcel. Without a county oak woodlands preservation ordinance, this increase will lead to wholesale removal of native oaks, other trees and brush, stripping the soil or permanently ruining it by covering it with gravel to build hoop houses.

The new growing structures will not be subject to county permitting and likely be constructed as cheaply as possible to ensure maximum short-term profit. The structures will simply become blight when profits diminish.

The decimation of habitat will increase erosion and stream siltation, killing fish and ruining spawning streams thus further decimating future fish populations and the small remaining fishing industry. The current and new unregulated grows, will remove massive amounts of water from the already fragile aquifer just as another drought begins!

Thousands of trees all over this county are already dying because of the lack of sufficient rainfall and the receding underground water table. These standing dead trees magnify the already unprecedented wildfire risks to life and property. Many of your constituents have already told you about their existing wells going dry! These thirsty expanded grows will simply make things much worse.

So what will the community consequences be from these changes? We all know that drug cartels and absentee owners are buying up land in our county in anticipation of making huge profits. Will that money be spent locally? probably not much of it. Will those criminals and absentee owners employ local residents at fair wages, provide stable employment, perhaps even with family benefits? Or will they hire the cheapest (tr)(im)igrant staff possible, and take their profits back home, outside Mendocino County?

Both the current and most recent sheriff have informed you of the crime that follows these huge fast-buck operations. Our county cannot afford an adequate law enforcement staff now, so why would you invite more crime and trouble from property owners who will not even significantly contribute to the tax base?

Please solve the problems with the existing cannabis program and do not try to take the easy way out. Do not sell out our soil and water resources and our quality of community life just to make it seem like you are “doing something”.

Please take the long view for the good of our local communities. You have experienced staff in many disciplines (planning, building, environmental and public health, legal, and law enforcement); who see the problems daily and could be a valuable resource for drafting enforceable regulations, to protect our county from carpetbaggers and gangs, while still allowing our branded niche industry to thrive, for the good of the community.

S Turner
5th District Resident