

June 1, 2021

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
Agenda Item: Cannabis Cultivation Ordinance 3a

Dear Supervisors:

I am a farmer of wine grapes, a winemaker, business owner and resident of Mendocino County. I have been watching the race to the bottom for the last year as cultivators (mostly illegal) tear out vineyards, clear fields, lay plastic and base rock, and erect hoop houses and opaque fencing. I can see at least five properties from my own that have gone through this process. I have talked to the county, referencing parcel numbers and street names and all but one are apparently without a permit. The one with a permit lights up night sky with their hoop houses even though it's not allowed. The pastoral views of this county are melting away right before our eyes. All of you will be complicit in its destruction if you allow this expansion that the majority or your constituents oppose.

The county is considering 22,000 square feet of hoop houses and a 10% grow footprint based on parcel size. If you approve this, the county will continue at an even more rapid rate than the last year to decline in livability, viability as a scenic/tourist destination, and its ability to attract businesses and talent other than for the growing and processing of cannabis. Growing in Mendocino county and having the privilege of marketing your product as such should require that the cannabis be grown in the soil of the county. This means that only sun-grown in the ground should be allowed. If you cannot grow in the ground with the sun and make it financially viable (while growing legally) then you should not be farming this crop in Mendocino County. The environmental impact of this sort of expansion will take generations to mitigate.

As a grape grower and winemaker there is a cycle of growth, production, maintenance and rest. The soil can rest, the water shed can rest, the roads, workers and the community can rest. If cannabis is allowed year around by using hoop houses, the burden will be on the soils, the roads, the watershed, the power grid (not to mention the carbon emissions this county would be responsible for producing), the community and our county as a whole. The heavy burden already on law enforcement will more than triple as the enforcement in regards to compliance and the crime that comes with the industry will no longer be seasonal, it will be year around.

This county will become a factory that never sleeps, never revitalizes itself and there will be an exodus of residents (this has already started) that are selling their properties to pot growers at far above market prices, driving the housing prices to unsustainable levels. This is its own crisis and the long term fallout of this bubble will have negative impacts for decades to come.

There is already a noticeable angst in the community around cannabis harvest. The influx of out of town trimmers, the increase in crime that comes with it, and the lack of respect for the citizens of the county. If you cannot see this then you are not paying attention and you are not listening to the majority of the people that voted you in to office. Please do not approve expansion at this time, We are in a serious drought which has only just begun. Expansion will require water which we do not have, additional law enforcement which at this time we do not have, and a lot of patience from the communities which we is also in short supply at this time.

Sincerely,

Eric Kaster
Redwood Valley