

May 4, 2021

Mendocino County Planning Commission
860 N. Bush St.
Ukiah, CA 95482

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Commissioners:

I am writing regarding our deep concern about the proposed increase in cannabis cultivation to up to 10% of the parcel area on agricultural and range land. This remarkable change would undoubtedly exacerbate many environmental and resource problems in our County, and in particular would worsen the already severe water shortage in Redwood Valley for both residential and agricultural uses.

As a member, and now President, of the Redwood Valley County Water District (RVCWD) Board of Directors, I've been in dozens of urgent discussions about the lack of water sources in our community. Over the past several years, Redwood Valley residents have had to watch dozens of new hoop houses, ugly fences, and both legal and illegal cannabis grows popping up all over. This is the valley that experienced a disastrous fire in 2017 that took NINE LIVES. This community is still reeling from losing hundreds of homes and livelihoods, dealing with thousands of downed trees, and struggling to obtain even a modicum of funding from the County's share of \$22 million in PGE funds just to repair the water and other infrastructure that was destroyed by wildfire. Now, large scale pot farms are only adding to the problems.

The increase of large scale cannabis cultivation will adversely affect water supply, no matter how the water is obtained: groundwater wells, stream diversion, rainwater ponds, theft from our hydrants—it doesn't matter. None of these sources can be spared, as RVCWD has already cut off agricultural water for this season, and is requiring that all residents on the water system restrict personal use to under 50 gallons per day. There is no water for larger cannabis grows.

Additionally, the first impact of the proposed 10% change would be to encourage large land holders to purchase and/or convert existing land uses to what is perceived as the more profitable cultivation of the cannabis cash crop. Redwood Valley residents, in the 2020 Community Action Plan draft, have indicated a strong preference for retaining the rural character of the community. The seeming invitation to large land holders to convert to a monoculture goes against the Plan adopted by the Municipal Advisory Council. This Plan reflects the strong wishes of a large plurality of current Redwood Valley residents, which in and of itself should tell the Commission something about your constituency.

I believe that the severe impacts of the proposed change needs to be further evaluated. No good can come of this insofar as water supply is concerned.

Respectfully,

Tom Schoeneman