

**County Board of Supervisors
Commentary on the Cannabis EIR Report 2017**

10.02.2017

We recognize the great achievement accomplished in the creation of this Environmental Impact Report. The broad sweeping vision is masterful and we are grateful for this response in addressing pressing issues that have arisen since and prior to legalization. It is not lost on us that the answer to controlling problems associated with unregulated cannabis is to create more inclusive regulations, those that invite participation, rather than limitation.

However, some concerns remain. Today, due to time constraint, I raise the following two:

The EIR conclusion that the “most permissive alternative” presents the least amount of environmental impact is significant. This finding provides the opportunity for the greatest number of current participants in the cottage industry to transition into a regulated market. But meeting these regulations will be costly and without some form of financial grace, prohibitive for entrepreneurs of small businesses.

The negative impacts of the Drug war have forced potential business people to remain underground. Many have suffered the consequences of operating in the shadows of illegality, yet these are the very people who have made up the movement to legalize cannabis and brought this discussion to the table today.

Understanding that significant cost can eliminate many local business people and encourage an environment conducive to wealthier industry players is obvious.

- In what ways will small businesses be encouraged to participate, considering the challenges associated with costs of meeting regulations?
- What policies can be put into place to insulate cottage industry who otherwise haven't the financial means to participate?

Santa Cruz County has witnessed an exodus of agricultural enterprise. While we do not intend to propose that cannabis agriculture replace the entirety of that loss, it is certain that we can learn a few things from this. It is difficult to ignore that cannabis is being viewed in a significantly singular manner, outside of an agricultural context. When we look at the impacts of inorganic farming on the north and south counties, in Bonny Doon and other areas where vineyards flourish, the imbalance is evident, all of which lend to the realization that cannabis industry, pioneered by small business is primed to be a rich man's playground.

Will you please address the reasoning behind the distinction between cannabis farming and any other agricultural endeavor (i.e., fire access, greenhouse construction, water storage, etc.)?

Kindly,

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