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October 27, 2017

Cannabis Comments c/o Matt Johnston
Planning Department
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Santa Cruz Planning Dept,

I am one of the many small business operators in the San Lorenzo Valley that recognize the cannabis trade as a vital part of our local economy. There have been economic estimates of the value of the crop in Santa Cruz County to be near half a billion dollars, putting its financial importance on par with tourism and the agriculture industry as a whole.

Common sense regulations designed to protect the environment, while supporting the thriving Boulder Creek cannabis industry, will continue to support many ancillary businesses that depend on the industry to survive.

A significant amount of cannabis production occurs in the greater Boulder Creek area. This industry supports hundreds of jobs for our neighbors. Cannabis producers are amongst the best patrons of our local businesses. They shop our stores, eat at our restaurants, and use professional services from local providers. The importance of the economic contribution to local businesses by people in the Santa Cruz Mountain cannabis trade cannot be overstated.

I am appreciative of the seriousness that the County has taken to ensure that we implement a viable and environmentally conscious program. I want to see responsible local producers adhering to calculated and meaningful rules and regulations. *However, when rules are overly/unnecessarily strict, cultivators will be forced to operate illegal and unregulated grows.* The cannabis industry has been in the Santa Cruz mountains for decades. In most situations, there is tremendous stewardship by our local producers who care about running a responsible operation that protects the environment in which they raise their families.

I support the findings of the Draft Environmental Impact Report and recommend adoption of the more permissive approach to regulation, which allows for a more audited participation by those in our area and beyond. I'd like to see the environmentally superior alternative to outright bans and restrictive proposals.

Thank you for your time,

Justin Acton

CC Supervisor Bruce McPherson, 5th District