

WAR ON CANNABIS CONTINUES

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You may notice many getting hit are talking about selling, just to escape the hornet's nest.

Those who received abatements, have at least two violations. Last I ran the figures, those who don't have money for attorney fees, or who lack aspirations to abide by corrupt laws, will, (according to the abatement notices) each potentially receive a bill of upwards of 1.8 million (10k per violation x 90 days). If you don't plan to sell your property, ever, I guess the consequential lien on it wont matter. But this is obviously entirely unconscionable and inconsistent with what the county should charge someone simply for cultivating a medicinal plant and simply having a greenhouse or outhouse, now reports include un-permitted solar systems are on that list.

Amidst a fuzzy arena of misrepresentations and misinformation, one thing is for sure, small farmers, many homesteaders and medical 215 holders, are reportedly 'getting hit the hardest with abatements and raids', while the 'most egregious offenders,' and mega grows are too often passed by. While a few outlier photos of select-busted mega grows, lump victims together, and serve to confuse and distort what is actually happening on the ground.

Local Cannabis Attorney Eugene Denson states in his blog, "I will say that it is amazing who is getting these notices, and from all I can tell, who is not. Not that I know the names, what I know is the garden sizes and Mrs. and Mr. Big are not the main target."

Many activists and local farmers have also confirmed this. One farmer reported to Greenfuse, "The most modest 215 farmers are getting busted left and right, while the largest farms are left alone," leaving her to wonder, "how can the county claim small farms are causing more damage than the large farms, simply because some had the money to buy a piece of paper with the counties stamp of approval on it?" That is a really good question.

Current County permit costs, taxes and associated fees require one to 'cultivate over 10k sq. ft. to break even,' one farmer calculated. So by design, the current permitting methods support mega mono-crop farms much larger than 10k sq. ft. (to make a profit), which tend to monopolize eventually, as seen in other agricultural industries. Consequentially, concentration of wealth and corporate farming, has never been sustainable, supportive of worker Rights, community health, or economic integrity. Yet this is where the county is taking us, via the total destruction of a once thriving industry and economy, via a debunked legalization process, and for what? A quick buck? Someone forgot to notice the back end costs here.

Ford describes the thought process behind these abatements, as if it is a game, stating, "We intentionally keep things random, we try to move around the county in order to be hitting different areas and not become too routine, so what we typically do is look for the largest most egregious evidences of violations that exist and then work around those areas..." He claims that the county is focusing on 11 sub watersheds where, "there is a higher concentration of cannabis cultivation. Those aren't necessary as large as the most egregious, but the fact of the matter is the concentration of those can cultivation sites are having an adverse effect of the streams both quantity and quality. One of the most recent areas we looked at was obviously Salmon Creek and the result of that was a high concentration of illegal sites, not necessarily huge sites."

Well that is an interesting claim on SO many fronts. Last I checked Salmon Creek ran mainly on stored water sources. Last I checked Salmon Creek was a humble homesteading community, many environmentalists, residing on land once destroyed by logging companies. You think activists fighting hack-and-squirt of chemicals on forests by day, go home at night, put on their hemp shoes, and go destroy their land or put poisons in the streams- think again. Most abatement recipients are not harming the environment. The majority of farmers who opted not to work with the county to get permitted, is actually more telling of how little County Government is trusted and how impossible they have made the compliance process.

Also if you will recall about 8 months ago Greenfuse reported a-not-so-fun fact that local Attorney Eugene Denson discovered, when he asked the water board about how bio-remediation, cleaning up the land and correcting problems was impacting watersheds. Denson stated, "when I asked if anyone was measuring the effect [legalization and remediation] had on the streams and the fisheries, which is the reason it's all being done, and the answer in short was- no. Adonna White said they had metrics, which I believe means they were measuring what is written on the application, but that's not the same thing as getting in the water and seeing if the temperature has changed."

So this narrative justifying the counties attack on small farms, rather than "the most egregious" and that being based on watershed sensitivity, seems a total sham. What evidence are these claims based on and why does it appear no evidence being obtained, proving such watershed impact allegations against cannabis solely. I'd like to see the impact of state sanctioned corporate timber harvests over time on these same watersheds. I want to see evidence of ranch cattle impact on streams. Or how about those new SUVs and trucks the county uses to raid people with, what does

that cost the general environment and contribute to climate change? But instead, cannabis cultivators are bearing all the blame for environmental degradation.

Another interesting contradiction in Ford's claim is what is happening in the Mattole watershed today, which is acknowledged as 'highly sensitive' and one of the very 11 he claims to be protecting. Somehow the sensitivity of these watersheds appears to not be an issue to the County when they can abide the harvesting of over 1,100 acres of old growth and mixed hardwood forests for profit by the multi-billionaire owners of the Gap, notorious sweat shop and child labor exploiters, how does 30 small farmers vs. 1,100 acres of ancient forest logged in the same threatened watershed compare?.

As usual, locals take action: The Petrolia-based **Lost Coast League (LCL)** filed a formal grievance with **SCS Global Services** for certifying as sustainable a logging plan by **Humboldt Redwood Co. (HRC)** on untouched, primary forests in the Mattole River watershed on Rainbow Ridge. Nearly 25% of HRC and sister company **Mendocino Redwood Co. (MRC)** holdings have been chemically treated. LCL contends that the timber company is using herbicides well beyond the "extreme and exceptional threshold." The HRC/MRC website notes 78,000 acres have been treated with herbicides. But more acres have been treated since the time of that assertion — including some 163 acres of previously un-entered Douglas-fir/mixed hardwood stands at Rainbow Ridge in the Mattole watershed.)

The League's **David Simpson** stated, "Logging Rainbow Ridge's native forests cannot qualify as sustainable under any reasonable criteria, especially under FSC's published standards, and would only serve to set back the gains our community's restoration efforts have made."

The irony that many people growing a few plants are getting hit, while the county and police sanction this total attack on ecosystems in the same watersheds (not-to-mention brave activists protecting them), is proof that this recent abatement attack has little to do with actual environmental impact.

The evolution of once solely criminal to majority civil violations is a direct consequence of legalization. Ford says he assumes cannabis is being cultivated in all greenhouses in the hills and he can do this without the burden of proof being beyond a reasonable doubt, but instead relying on 'substantial evidence', and claims "All we really need to demonstrate is that there is a reasonable amount of evidence pointing to the fact that this violation exists... This is not penal this is not a criminal offense these are civil." Leaving people to feel totally duped by prop 64, intending on decriminalizing cultivation, not making it worse.

The hypocrisy and opposite effects around legalization have been felt throughout many regions who unfortunately got tricked into voting to legalize as well.

For me, and for so many others we see nothing different. **WE ARE STILL CRIMINALS IN THE EYES OF THE GOVERNMENT.** I'm still being punished, people are still loosing their jobs, loosing kids and their Right to travel.

So, Legalization for Whom?

'War' continues next page >

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