



" PERSECUTED BY THIEVES "

I have been reporting on the legalization of cannabis in Humboldt County for years. Topics ranging from the County's illegal rewriting our cannabis tax law (Measure S), to the permit process that serves less than 10% of an entire industry, and the subsequent notices to abate the alleged nuisance of cannabis cultivation for the non-permitted at least 90% of farmers. In the process I have heard Planning and Building Director John Ford and District 2 (Southern Humboldt) Supervisor Estelle Fennel say many things that are false, misleading, completely inconsistent with the law and what's happening as a direct result of their policies. However my most recent records request findings take the prize.

Do you recall Humboldt County claim that they were not going after your unpermitted homes, your vegetable gardens, your compost toilets, your soil, or people living in mobile homes? Remember how the county said they were not putting liens on properties for cultivating a plant? I do, and I specifically remember the county assuring residents that they could be trusted to not use cultivation applications as evidence to charge people with later. Humboldt County lied on all counts.

Over 1,000 notices to abate the alleged nuisance of cultivating cannabis have been sent by the **Planning and Building Department (PBD)** with the support of the majority of our County's Supervisors. Additionally about 500 abatement warning letters were sent in the winter of 2019 with the threat of an abatement next season, the victims include people who were amputees, war veterans, single mothers and the disabled with only 6 plants each.

There is no indication that the PBD's year-round 40 abatement letter average a week letting up anytime soon. The PBD and Supervisors have stated that it is their goal to end all non-permitted cultivation and they've only hit about 1,200 of at least 15,000 farms county-wide. At the abatement program's inception Ford claimed they were going after the most egregious grows, until he discovered the larger grows had permits. Abatement recipients have included people who have only 6 plants or less than a 10x10 space. Ford has even inaccurately told residents that prop 215 no longer allows them to cultivate for their medical needs, consequentially several 215 holders have had to battle abatements regardless of doctor's recommendations.

Typically after you receive a notice to abate cannabis letter you either get heavily pressured by the PBD into signing away all of your rights via a compliance letter, that comes along with an average of a 30k fine OR you stand up and fight in an abatement hearing, hopefully with a lawyer. Abatement hearings are heard by a judge via satellite, which crashes a lot along with your right to due process. This judge is a member of an LLP, essentially a group of lawyers who were hired by Humboldt County. It seems obvious that these judges have an inherent bias based on keeping their job, but the judges have denied several lawyer's requests to recuse themselves. Luckily, these abatement hearing decisions can later be appealed and fought in a traditional court, which has yet to happen.

So far there have only been a few handfuls of cannabis related abatement hearings in Humboldt

scattered over a couple years, most are still in process. Recipients are often stuck in limbo for years before the hearing is scheduled, fearing fines of at least 10k daily for each charge. Depending on the charges, some are faced at the hearing with fines totaling around half a million. These fines rack up daily and the county's delay in scheduling them counts against the property owners, not the county. The time intensive aspect of the abatement programs seems a clever money making tactic. Not only is it more profitable to the county the longer they drag it out, it also isolates individual victim after victim. Which makes it less likely that anyone notices to rise up against the dire injustices happening throughout the county. The impacts of these policies are huge, yet it's happening behind closed doors, with next-to-no media coverage.

According to public records request findings from the Planning and Building Department abatement hearing decision order, here are examples of low-end fines placed on one property owner after his initial abatement hearing. It does not appear that this particular abatement recipient had a lawyer to represent him at the hearing.

- **Junk or inoperable vehicles** (those unregistered, those with damage or that are inoperable with repair costs exceeding the value, HCC 354-1) final fine **\$1,850** (\$50/day for 37 days).
- **Compost toilets** aka unapproved sewage disposal system HCC section 611-3, after toilet filled in the final fine amounted to **\$3,700** (\$100 per day for 37 days).
- **Having plastic pots in a neat stack, or a car seat removed from the car** in this case, aka "Improper Storage and Removal of Solid waste" HCC section 521-4 in this case fines amount to **\$9,250** (\$250 for 37 days) even after any actual trash in bags (though not photographed) had been removed.
- **Greenhouses and unpermitted homes**, aka Construction of building/ structure in Violation of building, plumbing and electrical code, HCC Section 331-28, came to a total fine of **\$18,500** (\$500 per day for 37 days).
- **Digging a rainwater catchment pond, aka grading without a permit**, HCC Section 331-14 total fine **\$18,500** (\$500/day for 37 days).
- **Growing a plant without a permit** aka "violation of Commercial Medical MJ ordinance HCC Section 331-14" total fine **\$37,000** (1,000/day for 37 days).

Notice the penalty for growing a plant carries the highest fine in this decision order.

The overarching theme in these hearing decisions is that living off the land or cultivating anything in Southern Humboldt is a liability in the hundreds of thousands. The ongoing assumption is that the government knows what is best for the environment, and your knowledge of living off the land is not acceptable unless you buy a permit and then it's all *totally* acceptable. The county keeps claiming legalization helps the environment, yet they are still not testing this theory in anyway. From streams to land to soil, the county hasn't a clue of any impact to the environment resulting from legalization. They do not care, **it's all about the money.**

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DEFORESTATION NORTHERN CALIFORNIA STYLE

Times have changed. We can't get away any longer with pointing in horror at Brazil as it deforests the Amazon while we in the U. S. smirkingly pretend we are merely "harvesting timber." It is time to return to the idea of demanding an Environmental Impact Report for anyone in the "harvesting" business. Use your head. "Harvesting" trees is planetary suicide in the age of Climate Catastrophe.

Many years ago, 1975 I believe, the Redwood Peanut mounted on a flatbed led a caravan of logging trucks around and around the headquarters in Sacramento of the then boy Governor, Jerry Brown. His administration was shifting from the previous all out deforestation system where people were charged a tax on standing trees, mandating cutting, and shifting instead to a system requiring an Environmental Impact Report. This was just too much too soon. The environmental movement on the Northcoast hardly existed. Isolated, the Governor and the Legislature crumpled before the pressure.

The bizarre *Timber Harvest Plan* was born. It never saw a tree it couldn't cut. Sometimes the plans are to be "mitigated", sometimes by a court, and then everything was cut pretty much the same way afterwards. Occasionally one of the *gyppo* chiefs might do a little time for skipping the "mitigation" altogether but by then the clearcutting was finished and the duff was blowing in the wind.

KRIS, a locally active "think tank" that does **whole watershed assessments**, that has a succinct analysis of the inadequacies of the Timber Harvest Plan. For one, **it was a fake from the beginning**. In 1975 the courts held that these state-approved timber "harvests" were required by water quality conscious CEQA to provide an Environmental Impact Report. The state, under intense pressure from the logging industry at its most truculent, caved quickly and amended CEQA to create the "**functional equivalent process**." Meaning the timber operators can get away with murder, covered by a pious litany of "concerns" for soil, water, plant, fish, and wildlife.

CalFire aka **CDF**, which oversees this crock, needs to be removed from the job, along with the "the Environmentalists" who have made a profession of losing the *THP* game. **The objective must be saving all** of the vast young redwood forest that is still here on the Northcoast, a forest that is our best defense against the inevitable forest fires which will rack this region. **No more cutting of Redwoods**. The mind-set that considers that the game was over when the old Growth was obliterated is obsolete. The Redwoods are a self-restoring forest and one that could shield us in the age of forest fires. Somehow this has not sunk in on the CalFire fire fighters? In fact, **every inch of forest**, not just Redwoods, must be re-approached as a planetary heritage that can't be further assaulted if we wish to assure ourselves of a future without Climate Catastrophe.

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GretaThunberg@WorldEconomicForum.Davos: Abandon the Fossil Fuel Economy!

We have just entered a new decade, a decade where every month and every day will be absolutely crucial in deciding what the future will look like. Towards the end of January, chief executives, investors and policymakers will gather in Davos for the 50th anniversary of the World Economic Forum. Young climate activists and school strikers from around the world will be present to put pressure on these leaders.

We demand that at this year's forum, participants from all companies, banks, institutions and governments immediately halt all investments in fossil fuel exploration and extraction, immediately end all fossil fuel subsidies and immediately and completely divest from fossil fuels.

We don't want these things done by 2050, 2030 or even 2021, we want this done now - as in right now.

We understand and know very well that the world is complicated and that what we are asking for may not be easy. But the climate crisis is also extremely complicated, and this is an emergency. In an emergency you step out of your comfort zone and make decisions that may not be very comfortable or pleasant. And let's be clear - there is nothing easy, comfortable or pleasant about the climate and environmental emergency.

Young people are being let down by older generations and those in power. To some it may seem like we are asking for a lot. But this is just the very minimum of effort needed to start the rapid sustainable transition.

The fact that this still - in 2020 - hasn't been done already is, quite frankly, a disgrace. Yet, since the 2015 Paris agreement, 33 major global banks have collectively poured \$1.9 trillion into fossil fuels, according to Rainforest Action's report. The IMF concluded that in 2017 alone, the world spent \$5.2 trillion subsidizing fossil fuels. **This has to stop.**

The world of finance has a responsibility to the planet, the people and all other species living on it. In fact, it ought to be in every company and stakeholder's interest to make sure the planet they live on will thrive. But history has not shown the corporate world's willingness to hold themselves accountable. So it falls on us, the children, to do that. We call upon the world's leaders to stop investing in the fossil fuel economy that is at the very heart of this planetary crisis. Instead, they should invest their money in existing sustainable technologies, research and in restoring nature. Short-term profit should not trump long-term stability of life.

The theme of this year's gathering in Davos is "*stakeholders for a cohesive and sustainable world*." According to the forum's website < weforum.org > leaders will meet to discuss ideas and improve our global progress on climate change. Our request to them is perhaps not so far-fetched considering that they say they understand and prioritize this emergency.

Anything less than immediately ceasing these investments in the fossil fuel industry would be a betrayal of life itself.

Today's business as usual is turning into a crime against humanity. We demand that leaders play their part in putting an end to this madness. Our future is at stake, let that be their investment.

- Greta Thunberg
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