

# GREEN RUSH GOING MAINSTREAM

**Arcata Land Company - AKA - Sun Valley Floral Farms** sought a "Conditional Use Permit" that would allow 8 acres of cannabis in plastic hoop houses and an additional .7 acres of hoop houses as a nursery - pared down from their initial 23-acre, 1 million sq.ft. greenhouse operation permit request opposed by the **Humboldt County Growers Alliance**, neighbors, Arcata residents and environmental groups.

On July 13th the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors voted 3-2 to allow the controversial plan, amended to 5.7 acres of cultivation, with Fifth District Supervisor Steve Madrone and Third District Supervisor Mike Wilson voting no, while Fourth District Supervisor Virginia Bass, First District Supervisor Rex Bohn and Second District Supervisor Michelle Bushnell voted yes. Ironically the majority is composed of the more conservative members of the board who appear to have ignored the considerations urged by citizens opposing the plan. These considerations include:

**CONFLICT BETWEEN ZONING AND THE GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION:** This grow should be limited to what would be allowed under the General Plan designation which would be 1 acre (maximum of 2). We would suggest a phased-in approach starting small and working out the issues before allowing additional acreage.

**LOSS OF AG LAND:** Covering 8.7 acres with hoop houses and an additional 1-2 acres with concrete will take this ag land out of production and the land will no longer be able to capture carbon, which will impact climate change. Covering this much land with hoop houses in an attempt to control the environment in a cold, wet, windy area is a terrible idea.

**WATER:** A conservative estimate is that over **11.7 million gallons of water will be used every year** which will impact local wells and could cause salt water intrusion. A drought could make this even worse. Additionally, water usage should be based on the number of plants and the number of rotations, neither of which are disclosed in the ALC/SV application.

**ENERGY USE:** This project wants to grow cannabis in an environment that is not suited to growing cannabis. This means that to successfully grow the plant, the environment will need to be tightly controlled. Added heat, dehumidifiers, fans, lights, etc., will all be needed to grow cannabis in this location. **Daily average energy use JUST for grow lights will be over 2% of what the entire county uses daily.** Heating the plastic hoop houses could require up to 3 million BTUs/hour of natural gas. None of the other energy calculations were provided in the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration.

**THIS IS NOT SMALL FARMER FRIENDLY:** Small farmers and their employees could lose their livelihoods if this is permitted. Many small cannabis farmers are against this project for a number of reasons including that a project of this size could destroy small farmers and their craft products.

**ODOR IMPACTS:** Imagine the smell from 8 acres of cannabis 24/7 for at least six months out of the year. The project is upwind of many homes and neighborhoods in an area that often sees wind gusts over 20 m.p.h.

**NOISE IMPACTS** will be substantial. Imagine the noise from all the fans required for the 8 plus acres of hoop houses needed to grow this much cannabis in the cold, humid, wet, windy Arcata Bottom.



**SECURITY and LIGHTS:** What will the security for this high value crop look like? What impact will the motion-sensor security lights in this huge area have on the night skies? Imagine bats flying by, skunks, raccoons, foxes running through and all the night critters that live out here triggering the motion sensors.

**SOCIAL COSTS: Health, Safety and Well-being.** The final Humboldt County EIR for regulating commercial cannabis activities (published in 2018) states the "cumulative impacts from exposure of people to objectionable odors would be cumulatively considerable and significant and unavoidable." Other impacts to nearby homes and neighborhoods are noise pollution, light pollution from security lights and grow lights for 8 plus acres, loss of the pastoral view-shed, devaluation of property, potential increase in crime. **There is no other cannabis grow in Humboldt of this size this close to homes and neighborhoods.**

**This is only one of a series of permits that threaten the Arcata Bottom and the Arcata Greenbelt.** According to the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration, one permit (the old Simpson Warehouse) has already been approved for manufacturing, processing, and distribution of cannabis. Next to this is a 3-acre cannabis grow with a pending permit. At least two more permits have been applied for within one mile of this project. **The cumulative impact of all these permits together could be devastating for the Arcata Bottom.**

Thanks to [savethearcatabottoms.com](http://savethearcatabottoms.com)



## NEVER GIVE AN INCH: HOW ABOUT 10% ???

At its meeting on Wednesday, June 2nd, the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors approved the Phase 3 Cannabis ordinance which includes the controversial 10 percent Expansion Rule that allows cultivation to occur on 10 percent of the overall acreage on parcels that are at least 10 acres in size. The expansion proposed in both acreage and zoning has the potential to dramatically change what our county will be.

We can already see environmental damage from supposedly small grows. In this time of drought, local residents fear that massive use of water for growing cannabis will dry up wells and springs, leaving people short of water for the essentials of life. Wildlife will suffer as animals become more desperate as riverbeds and waterholes dry up. The cumulative impacts of this expansion need to be studied and an environmental impact report demanded.

Communities will change, with hoop houses replacing pastoral vistas. Food and regular Non cannabis? agriculture will not be able to compete as land prices skyrocket. Food production will be converted to cannabis production. Prime ag lands and vulnerable range lands will be rocked over, plastics will cover the land, guard dogs and higher security will dominate our country roads, valleys and hillsides. Code enforcement and law enforcement have already lost control of the situation. When the boom bursts, which it will, whoever and whatever is left will have a lot of cleaning up to do.

Wall Street investors, buying up land for profit are instigating a race to the bottom, damaging our local economy by bringing cheap labor and extracting profits to benefit far-away private equity funds.

Folks led by Ellen and David Drell, of the Willits Environmental Center, are preparing to circulate a referendum that if approved by voters would repeal the entire Phase 3 Ordinance.

Concurrently "Small Is Beautiful Mendocino", will present to voters a referendum to repeal just the 10 percent Rule because we believe it is not necessary to strike down the entire Ordinance and would only continue the chaos surrounding the history of the Cannabis Program in this County.

Prior to formally launching our effort, **Small Is Beautiful Mendocino** sent the Board of Supervisors the following letter requesting the Board voluntarily hold an election solely

on the 10 percent Expansion Rule. Here are excerpts from the letter:

"...The County is now in its fifth year of attempting to resuscitate a failed and chaotic Cannabis Program. Even the Supervisors themselves have gone on record and called it a "failure" and "unworkable."

This County has spent more time and probably money on this issue than any other in County history, a statement that the Board has also said on the record.

The primary issue of the proposed Phase 3 Ordinance that has generated by far the most concern and driven by far the greatest public discussion is the so-called "10 percent Rule."

The vast majority of citizens recognize that the 10 percent Rule, if adopted, will lead to unprecedented expansion of cannabis cultivation on a scale never imagined by anyone familiar with the history of marijuana in this area and era...

Conservatively speaking, 70 percent of County residents oppose the 10 percent Rule and its direct causal adverse impact on our most valuable natural resource, water. They are aware that the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, the State Water Board's main enforcement arm on the North Coast, recently issued an Investigative Order that found:

**"The North Coast Region is inundated with cannabis cultivation in headwaters and main river systems, with active, developed sites in steep and rugged terrain. Cultivation and related activities throughout the North Coast Region have resulted in significant waste discharges and losses of in-stream flows associated with improper development of rural landscapes on privately-owned parcels, and the diversion of springs and streams, to the cumulative detriment of the Regional Water Board's designated beneficial uses of water."**

They are also very much aware that this state and the County we all love and live in, is in the second consecutive year of severe drought conditions. To them it's counter-intuitive for their elected representatives to propose unchecked cannabis expansion whether it's occurring during a drought or non-drought period because water resources will be impacted during either event, it's only a question of degree....

Elected officials are duty-bound to carry out the wishes/demands of clear majorities of constituents unless what they're asking is unlawful or totally unfeasible, neither of which are applicable with the "10 Percent Rule." It's not the Supervisor's job to substitute their judgment for that of their constituents when they overwhelmingly demand a different course of action than that proposed by the Supervisor.

Essentially what's occurring here is a clash of values and economic models between most County voters and the Board of Supervisors.

There are four Supervisors advocating for the super-sized cultivation model as they believe, and have said, that County revenues will be enhanced with expansion. They argue that it's not their responsibility to protect small growers through the mechanism of a Cannabis Ordinance. Yet they see nothing wrong with constructing a regulatory framework that favors industrial and corporate cultivators.

The primary goal of public policy is to accomplish the most good for the most people. The Board's proposed Cannabis public policy is the very antithesis of that objective. County-wide, there is a super-majority of residents who overwhelmingly are opposed to the proposed 10 Percent Rule."

In a democracy, the elected representatives need to listen to the people. The Planning Commission received over 400 letters. 99 percent were against this expansion. The Sheriff, Farm Bureau, Municipal Advisory Councils of Laytonville, Redwood Valley and Round Valley, Willits and Mendocino Environmental Centers, Covelo Cannabis Advocacy Group, and many other groups are against this proposal. Big cannabis businesses are for it.

Mendocino County has failed to properly implement Phase I and II of the ordinance. Permits were wrongly granted. Out of the 1,100 in the county permit system, only a handful have received state annual licenses which is what is needed to grow legally after Jan. 1, 2022. Code enforcement can't keep up. Law enforcement has been overwhelmed by illegal grows. Yet somehow some Board members believe that this new ordinance, opening up range land and expanding grow sites will make everything right.

A Greenfuse remix compiled from letters by **Mendocino county 3rd district supervisor John Haschak**

**& Jim Shields**  
Mendocino County Observer