

**Cannabis Visioning Session – Water Considerations –
August 11, 2021 – 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM – Chat**

00:19:22 Sarah Stierch: 📧 Please send us your ideas, questions, feedback and thoughts to cannabis@sonoma-county.org.

🔗 Learn more about this process and get involved:

<https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Cannabis/Comprehensive-Cannabis-Program-Update-and-Environmental-Impact-Report/>

00:19:47 Sarah Stierch: 🗎 The Coastal Zone will not be effected by this ordinance. See what comprises the Coastal Zone here: <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/PRMD/Services/Zoning-and-Parcel-Report/Zoning-Codes-Coastal/>

00:26:04 Sarah Stierch: 📧 Please send us your ideas, questions, feedback and thoughts to cannabis@sonoma-county.org.

00:34:19 McCall Miller: From T Levy: Request the Board of Supervisors impose a moratorium on groundwater wells for cannabis cultivation in Groundwater Availability Zones 3 and 4 for ministerial and CUP discretionary approval. Groundwater wells in any areas in the County designated as Groundwater Availability Zones 3 or 4. These are areas where groundwater supplies are limited and uncertain; thus, vulnerable to groundwater overdraft and reduced groundwater recharge.

Require comprehensive Water Availability Analysis: Determine all current and projected water usage needs in the County across all uses - residential, agricultural, commercial and industrial- and based on this information, determine available water for new cannabis operations under drought conditions as well as historical averages. (cont)

00:34:39 McCall Miller: Continued: Recommend the County pre-test the adequacy or reliability of net-zero water plans – (rainwater catchment basins, etc.) and whether they interfere substantially with groundwater recharge. These analyses are crucial in light of the drought that has gripped this State for the past several years.

Demand an adequate analysis of Environmental Setting- by watershed: The County must gather data and complete analyses on:

- the number of existing legal and illegal cultivation sites, including renewals
- then estimate the number of eligible sites (based on siting criteria) that may apply for permits,
- accurately estimate the amount of water supply needed for those sites,
- evaluate the potential impacts on surface and groundwater resources,
- proactively evaluate whether net-zero catchment plans produce needed water supplies and impacts on groundwater replenishment for neighboring well.

00:35:22 McCall Miller: From D Donovan: given the extreme drought we are all in, no new commercial well permits should be issued for the foreseeable future, until several years of rainfall indicate that weather patterns have returned to what they were when recharge rates of aquifers were first calculated as being adequate to support homes and farms. This isn't singling out the cannabis industry, in particular. And it shouldn't pertain to permits to REPLACE aging or drying-up wells; but to adding new wells. It is just common sense for the entire county, to be able to manage the diminishing water resources we all must share.

00:36:57 McCall Miller: From N Graalman: In the end: Sonoma County should be a state leader in recognizing the mega-drought emergency. There are NO new "codes" that would protect an

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irreplaceable resource in aquifers and in streams and rivers throughout Franz Valley and all of Sonoma County if cannabis operations are permitted. Cannabis permitting should be halted.

00:37:34 McCall Miller: From R Rudnansky: What do you think are the most important water resources that we need to protect as we develop the guidelines for the cannabis program? Given the current drought and what now appears will be regular future droughts due to climate change, commercial cannabis cultivation should be one of the lowest priorities after uses for housing, traditional agriculture, and wildlife habitat. Existing aquifers and wells, ground and surface water and water from rivers and streams that are currently being used by existing individual residences and neighborhoods should not be depleted or reduced.

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00:41:58 McCall Miller: From R Rudnansky: What would a successful cannabis operation look like that protects our water resources? All operations should be required to have grey water systems and storage systems installed. All cultivation should be done by drip systems or by hand watering. Given the current and what appears will be the future water shortages, only operations that use onsite water supplies that do not impact any water supplies outside of the cannabis related properties should be allowed if at all. Limit the number of permits issues and permit only small so called “mom and pop” operations. When residential and others are types of uses are asked or mandated to reduce water usage this should also apply to cannabis operations. No special favors for cannabis operations.

00:42:07 Sarah Stierch: ✉️Please email us your ideas, questions and comments to Cannabis@sonoma-county.org

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00:44:22 McCall Miller: From D Donovan: In the future, there will be a greater need to dry farm crops. Those which do not lend well to dry farming (such as water-hungry almonds, for example) will not be able to adequately adjust to the "new norm" of less water availability, and may be replaced by crops and varieties which are able to get by on less.

00:46:46 David Kuszmar (he/him/his): Sonoma County Water Supply, Use, and Conservation Assessment Guidelines can be found here: <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/PRMD/Policies-and-Procedures/8-2-1-Water-Supply-Use-and-Conservation-Assessment-Guidelines/>

00:48:16 Sarah Stierch: ✉️Please email us your ideas, questions and comments to Cannabis@sonoma-county.org

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00:54:28 McCall Miller: From R Rudnansky: What would successfully protecting natural habitats and species look like when it comes to cannabis cultivation? Prohibit any commercial cannabis operations from using water from the Russian River and its tributaries. Require greywater systems. Operations should only use on site water that does not impact sources of water for other properties. Require significant setbacks to streams and rivers and control and recirculate runoff.

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00:55:48 McCall Miller: From T Levy: - Use Geo-spatial analysis to map at parcel scale, then exclude parcels with certain sensitive habitats, per CDFW.

01:00:38 David Kuszmar (he/him/his): The Water Boards' riparian setbacks apply state-wide based on stream type. Here is a link to the statewide Cannabis Cultivation Policy:
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/cannabis/docs/policy/final_cannabis_policy_with_attach_a.pdf

01:00:44 David Kuszmar (he/him/his): Refer to Attachment A, Definition 100 and General Term 37 for details.

01:02:24 McCall Miller: From R Rudnansky: What would successfully protecting riparian corridors look like when it comes to cannabis cultivation? Do not allow any commercial cannabis cultivation in riparian corridors or in areas that would have an impact on riparian corridors. Require setbacks that would not allow runoff to get into riparian corridors and recirculate runoff.

01:03:04 Sarah Stierch: Figure out if you should double state water setbacks, or follow the most strict standards that are already in place for any ag

01:04:38 Sarah Stierch: ✉️ Please email us your ideas, questions and comments to Cannabis@sonoma-county.org

01:05:15 Sarah Stierch: 🗑️ Here is the County's Right to Farm ordinance:

https://library.municode.com/ca/sonoma_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CH30AG_ARTIIRIFA

01:07:26 David Kuszmar (he/him/his): For those interested in learning more about cannabis irrigation sources and water use rates in Northern California counties, check out this 2019 article, co-written by a members of the North Coast Regional Water Board staff:
<http://calag.ucanr.edu/archive/?article=ca.2019a0011>

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01:07:44 David Kuszmar (he/him/his): Similar work by UC Berkeley researches is ongoing, and additional published works are expected soon.

01:11:16 McCall Miller: From R Rudnansky: What would successful water conservation efforts for cannabis cultivation look like in normal years? Newsflash: this year may now be the new normal. Therefore there should not be any further expansion or new approvals of cannabis operations period.

01:18:08 McCall Miller: From R Rudnansky: What would a successful approach to a drought look like for cannabis cultivation in the county? Put in place an immediate moratorium on accepting, processing, and approving any applications for cannabis cultivation and impose new requirements on existing commercial operations such as grey water systems and rainwater storage

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01:24:14 Sarah Stierch (she/her): ✉️Please email us your ideas, questions and comments to Cannabis@sonoma-county.org

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01:28:00 McCall Miller: From R Rudnansky: What does successful accountability look like when it comes to water and cannabis? What would it mean to hold cannabis growers accountable? Any violations of any water regulations, conditions of permits, and water conservation measure requirements should be immediately and aggressively investigated (without advance notice to the operators as to on site investigations) and if substantiated should be immediately abated and fines levied. Any cannabis operator violating water requirements should be required to pay all costs of investigation and abatement. There should be zero tolerance. If the operator is in violation of water requirements and regulations more than twice, their permit should be revoked and operation closed down. In addition all permits should be reviewed on an annual basis and if operators are found to be out of compliance, abatement proceedings should be commenced and pursued to conclusion with operator paying all costs. (cont)

01:28:05 McCall Miller: continued: Operators should not be given any special exemptions from County ordinances or regulations regarding water usage. Operators should be required to post a bond

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upon issuance of any permit to pay for potential abatement proceedings and fines. There should be ownership and residency requirements placed operators to limit out of county operators.

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01:33:04 McCall Miller: From R Rudnansky: What additional thoughts do you have about the water aspects of a successful cannabis program?

All these visioning sessions and the questions being asked seem to assume that there will expansion of cannabis operations. Rather, it seems to me that the Board of Supervisors should revisit whether there should be any cannabis cultivation or other operations permitted in the County at all rather than how to expand the industry. Given climate change, the current drought, and the continued demand on water from housing development, any new ordinance should not provide for any additional cannabis operations that are not at this time already permitted. (cont)

01:33:19 McCall Miller: Continued: There should immediately put in place a moratorium on accepting, processing, or approving any applications for cannabis operations. Include and analysis in the EIR a “no project” alternative (i.e. no further expansion of cannabis industry) for consideration by the public and the Board. Do not exempt existing operations from any water regulations or conservation measures imposed on or asked of the general public.

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01:39:01 David Kuszmar (he/him/his): The Water Boards regulate discharges of waste associated with cannabis cultivation sites through its statewide Cannabis Cultivation Policy and General Order. For more information about statewide requirements for cannabis cultivators, click here:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/cannabis/cannabis_water_quality.html

01:40:54 Sarah Stierch (she/her): ✉️Please email us your ideas, questions and comments to Cannabis@sonoma-county.org

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01:41:23 McCall Miller: From N Graalman: The siren song of cannabis profits makes moot any true concern about curbing the water-rapacious cannabis operations. The guided sessions to get to "what will a successful cannabis program look like" for water, riparian corridors, safety . . anything . . . seem to be Kabuki theater.