

Unregulated Agriculture

By Hezekiah Allen

Executive Director, Emerald Growers Association

Introduction

- ▶ Hezekiah Allen, Executive Director, Emerald Growers Association
- ▶ Born at home, raised off the grid
- ▶ Grew up on a small cannabis farm
- ▶ Owned and operated a successful small cannabis farm
- ▶ Worked as Executive Director of the Mattole Restoration Council
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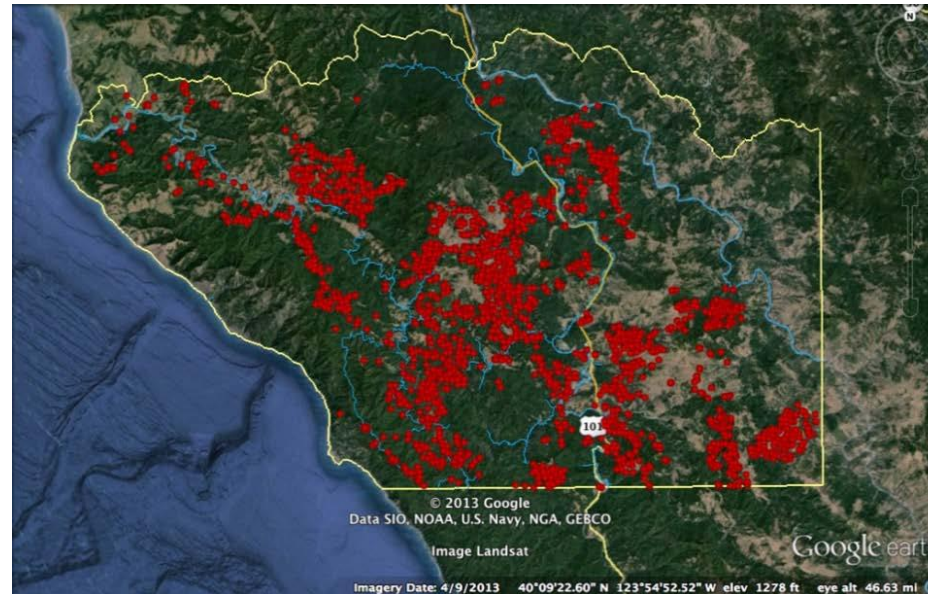
Background

Assumption

- ▶ According to the report titled *Marijuana Production in the United States (2006)*, California produced 8.6 million pounds with a value of \$13.8 billion.
- ▶ For the sake of this presentation I have assumed that production has increased to 20 million pounds per year. All economic and environmental estimates provided are based on that number.

Estimates

- ▶ We estimate that there are more than 50,000 cannabis farms in CA
- ▶ We estimate that each farm creates 4.8 FTE living wage jobs



Assumptions and definitions

- ▶ A small farm is less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of an acre in production (proposed, EGA and AB 266)
- ▶ Assumption: CA is producing between 10 and 20 million pounds of cannabis per year at a retail value of between \$16,000,000,000 and \$32,000,000,000



Emerald Growers Association

- ▶ We supported emergency drought provisions in the budget bills
- ▶ We support all three regulatory bills proposed this year
- ▶ We support the regional water boards pilot program as well as the wastewater discharge waiver program
- ▶ For several years we have been on the frontline promoting BMP's and water conservation
- ▶ We are actively supporting all current legislation to regulate cannabis cultivation like agriculture

How much water?

- ▶ We don't know.
- ▶ Natural resource agencies use the number 6 gallons per day per plant
- ▶ I will use the more accurate formula:

1 gallon per pound per growing day

How much water?

- ▶ 20 million pounds produced
- ▶ Large plants (5 pounds per plant) take longer to grow (150 day growing season). If CA grows 4 million large plants the water use is estimated to be: 3,000,000,000 gallons
- ▶ Small plants (1/4 pound per plant) take a shorter time to grow (90 day growing season). If CA grows 80 million small plants the water use is estimated to be: 1,800,000,000 gallons

How much water?

- ▶ Large plants: 3,000,000,000 gallons= 9207 acre feet
- ▶ Small plants: 1,800,000,000 gallons= 5524 acre feet

- ▶ Our estimate: Cannabis cultivation is using somewhere around 7500 acre feet per year

- ▶ Context: California uses around 35,000,000 acre feet of water per year for agriculture

How much water?

- ▶ In 2009, Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) estimated that 30,000 acre-feet/year was being illegally diverted from the Russian River
- ▶ When was the last time the sheriff destroyed a vineyard to protect water resources?

Inherent trade offs: Economy meets Environment

Revenue

- ▶ Total agricultural output of the state: \$46 billion
- ▶ About \$1300 per acre foot
- ▶ Cannabis agricultural output in CA: \$16 to 32 billion
- ▶ About \$3.2 million per acre foot

Jobs

- ▶ Agriculture uses about 35 million acre feet and creates about 350,000 jobs
- ▶ 100 acre feet per job created
- ▶ Cannabis cultivation uses between 5 and 10 thousand acre feet and creates about 250,000 jobs
- ▶ 0.04 acre feet per job created

Solutions

What won't work

- ▶ Marijuana Enforcement Team
- ▶ Continued raids and drug war style enforcement

What will work

- ▶ Watershed Enforcement Team
- ▶ Widespread inspections
- ▶ Business licensing
- ▶ Distinguishing between criminal and unregulated
- ▶ Improving access to technical support programs, grant programs, and other existing incentive programs
- ▶ Sustained and increased outreach and education

Moving forward: Regulate cultivation as agriculture

Raids won't work

- ▶ Unannounced
- ▶ Crop is destroyed
- ▶ Farmer is often times hiding after decades of heavy handed law enforcement

Inspections will work

- ▶ Advance notice
- ▶ Crop is not destroyed
- ▶ Farmer can have consultant in the field and can work with environmental scientists to solve problems

What you can do:

- ▶ Regulate commercial cannabis
- ▶ Pass and develop an excise tax program
- ▶ More resources for the water board and CDFW
- ▶ Develop a balanced approach: we need carrots and sticks (existing regs, existing incentives)
- ▶ Spread the word: Cannabis cultivation is agriculture not a crime. Cannabis growers are farmers not criminals. We are here to solve problems.

Thank you!

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