



Media Release

State Water Board Adopts Environmental Standards for Cannabis Cultivation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Oct. 17, 2017

Contact: George Kostyrko
Phone: (916) 341-7365

SACRAMENTO – Today, the State Water Board adopted a new statewide policy establishing strict environmental standards for cannabis cultivation in order to protect water flows and water quality in California's rivers and streams.

Commercial cannabis cultivation is expected to grow significantly and spread to new areas of the state following adult use legalization. If left unregulated, cannabis cultivation could pose serious threats to water quality and fish and wildlife by diverting water or releasing fertilizers, pesticides, and sediments into waterways.

"We are establishing the environmental protection rules of the road needed to deal with the expected expansion of cannabis cultivation statewide," said State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus. "Today's action creates a strict set of rules cannabis cultivators will need to follow in order to protect water quality and quantity. We will work closely with other state agencies to make sure cultivators are aware of these rules and are following them."

The new [Cannabis Cultivation Policy](#) establishes statewide requirements that will be implemented through a water quality permit known as the Cannabis General Order and as conditions for cannabis-related water rights referred to as Cannabis Small Irrigation Use Registrations. The policy protects California's waters from cannabis-related waste discharges, establishes protections for riparian areas and wetlands, and protects stream flows.

The policy was adopted following a public review process that included three workshops earlier this year to solicit comments and feedback. The draft policy was released in early July, building on existing regulations developed by the North Coast and Central Valley regional water quality control boards. The new statewide policy replaces those regional regulations.

The policy was also developed in consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and will be incorporated into all commercial cannabis licenses issued by CDFA under its [CalCannabis Cultivation Licensing Program](#). The policy takes effect upon approval by the Office of Administrative Law, expected sometime late in 2017.





Since 2013, the State Water Board's Office of Enforcement has worked with the North Coast and Central Valley regional water boards and with CDFW to address environmental impacts from cannabis cultivation. The State Water Board will continue its enforcement efforts, closely monitoring compliance with the new statewide policy and taking appropriate enforcement action when needed.

The policy applies to cannabis cultivation and is specifically designed to address Proposition 215, the Compassionate Use Act, which established the medical cannabis industry, and Proposition 64, the Adult Use of Marijuana Act, which legalized recreational cannabis cultivation, and possession and use of limited amounts of cannabis by adults over 21 years of age. The policy does not apply to personal cultivation for recreational use.

For more information, please visit:

State Water Board Cannabis Cultivation Programs

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

Policy Fact Sheet

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/publications_forms/publications/factsheets/docs/cannabis_factsheet.pdf

Subscribe to the Cannabis Cultivators Email List (Under Water Quality)

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/swrcb_subscribe.html

Coordinating Agencies:

California Department of Food and Agriculture, CalCannabis Cultivation Licensing

<https://www.cdffa.ca.gov/is/mccp/>

Bureau of Cannabis Control

<http://bcc.ca.gov/>

California Department of Public Health, Manufactured Cannabis Safety Branch

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DFDCS/Pages/MCSB.aspx>

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Cannabis>

California Department of Pesticide Regulation

<http://www.cdpr.ca.gov/>

###

