

Supervisor Applauds Water Supply Rules

Appeal-Democrat - Corning Observer

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October 7, 2015

Tehama County Supervisor Bob Williams, second vice chair of the Rural County Representatives of California, testified last week before the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board in support of the board's proposed Waste Discharge Requirements for medicinal cannabis cultivation.

"The immediate threat to water quality posed by marijuana cultivation has increased dramatically in recent years as our rural counties have seen a continual expansion of the scale and volume of individual grow sites," Williams said. "On behalf of California's rural leaders, I applaud the Central Valley Water Board for taking steps to address the effects of marijuana cultivation on our state's water quality."

The Water Board adopted the proposed WDRs as a General Order on Friday, setting the tone for the rest of the state in addressing water quality concerns related to marijuana cultivation.

The requirements are set to protect the environment from discharges associated with cannabis cultivation activities.

According to the Central Valley Water Board, the general order serves as a permit that will be issued to landowners and cultivators engaged in growing medicinal cannabis as long as they meet specific conditions, including those imposed by local ordinances.

Those conditions address erosion control and drainage features, stream and wetland buffers, water storage and use, irrigation runoff, fertilizers and pesticides, petroleum products and other chemicals and wastes.

Williams expressed appreciation for the requirement that cultivators must comply with county regulations and ordinances before the Water Board approves any Notice of Intent, as maintaining county control over land use and other issues related to marijuana cultivation is of utmost importance to California's rural counties.

Secondly, Williams said he, and other state rural leaders, support the imposition of an annual fee to support the Water Board's enforcement activities so that other established water dischargers aren't forced to subsidize enforcement and clean-up activities for marijuana cultivation sites.

"Our goal is to protect water quality and the environment from the significant impacts that may occur from cannabis cultivation," said Pamela Creedon, Central Valley Water Board executive officer, in a press release.

Tehama County adopted a marijuana cultivation ordinance in August 2013. That ordinance has been amended, the most recent amendment in March 2015 which prohibits the outdoor cultivation of marijuana on the premise outdoor cultivation is a public nuisance and increases the risk of trespassing, burglary and acts of violence.

"Additionally, experience in Tehama County and elsewhere demonstrates that outdoor cultivation of marijuana is often associated with violations of local, state and federal environmental laws and pesticides regulations, threatening harm to local waterways and groundwater quality, and endangering the public health and safety," the amendment states.

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