

# County's handling of cannabis code comes under scrutiny

*By Nick Baptista / The Valley Springs News / June 28, 2023*

Calaveras County's recent venture to allowing the legal cultivation of cannabis has been fraught with problems, according to a report released last week by the 2022-2023 Calaveras County Grand Jury.

"Calaveras County is among those counties that have allowed cannabis cultivation but have not developed a regulatory program that addresses all environmental concerns in the county," the summary of the report titled Calaveras Cannabis Dis-Jointed said. "Problems created by poor regulation include little to no reduction in the number of illegal cultivation sites, excessive tax burden on those cultivators attempting to grow legally, harm to the environment from widespread use of fertilizers, pesticides and other processing chemicals, pollution of the county's water system, and uncoordinated regulation from numerous county agencies."

The grand jury found the county's Environmental Management Agency and Code Compliance do not test for contaminants in soil and water at cannabis cultivation sites, so any environmental impact remains unseen. Because of this oversight, the grand jury recommends that Environmental Management Agency, Code Compliance, and the sheriff's office work together to coordinate efforts in the collection of soil and water samples at cultivation sites that have been identified by the Marijuana Enforcement Team, to be tested for contaminants by Jan. 1, 2024.

In addition, the grand jury was critical of the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors for not requesting or receiving regular updates on the impact of its decision to allow legal cannabis cultivation. "(T)hus they and the public are not adequately informed of the environmental consequences facing the county," the grand jury said in this finding.

The jury is recommending the Board of Supervisors begin receiving a periodic briefing from the Division of Cannabis Control, Environmental Management Agency and sheriff's office about any activity related to environmental impacts of the cannabis industry in the county.

In its final finding, the jury report said Calaveras County Cannabis Code allowed for environmental remediation on cultivation sites to alleviate concerns about environmental damage, but available records do not support that this code has been actively enforced, leaving any environmental damage unchecked.

The grand jury's recommendation calls for the Board of Supervisors to instruct the Division of Cannabis Control and Code Compliance to actively enforce the cannabis codes related to remediation of cannabis cultivation sites by the beginning of next year.

The complete report can be found at the grand jury's website –

<http://grandjury.calaverasgov.us> .