

For decades, Elk River has been a well-regulated disaster. We have plenty of rules — now including the 56 pages of Cannabis 2.0, which provide no protection for residents, no notice of action, and no place to appeal except to the people who wrote the rules and those with money in the game.

When a six-greenhouse monster-fan light show appeared in a downriver neighborhood, we thought an alien ship had landed. Surely they would realize their mistake and return to their home planet. Instead, it got louder and brighter and smelled like marijuana, and many of the valley's residents complained. Eventually, our county supervisor had to come out, dragging his planning director along, and explain to the forty or so residents gathered beside one of the greenhouses that there was nothing he could do.

It's zoned ag/residential, he said. A grow can go anywhere in that zone — any neighborhood, no notice, end of story. As long as they pay the County its cannabis fees, no additional permit (is) required. Same as pigs.

A couple of years later another grow moved in, farther upriver. They figured it was safe to ignore the County's rules, and they were right. The planning department failed to act on the neighborhood's complaints. They weren't following their own rules. Finally, Regional Water Quality (not always a friend of Elk River) issued a shut-down order. Even then, the clean-up dragged on for months.

I can't interfere in the permit process, our supervisor explained.

Measure A requires public notice and public process. It provides protection for water sources, the environment, and the county's rural residents. Growers and investors had their say in writing the regulations — but for the rest of us, those rules are not working.

Citizen initiatives are a last resort. Opponents say it's a bad way to make policy, hard to change. Leave it to your elected representatives. Really? After the same-as-pigs show, some of us went to the supervisor of another district. He was sympathetic but said it would be very hard to get the Board to change the law. The Planning Department actively opposes and misrepresents the initiative. Our non-interfering supervisor now claims it will cause a mass die-off. Like he's the environmentalist and farmers are an endangered species.

This may prove true. Humboldt County is managing cannabis with the same tactics that have regulated timber for decades, favored treatment for the big guys while killing off nearly every small business and destroying the resource. The Growers Alliance has allied itself with the wrong people.

When Mark Thurmond brought his petition to a gathering at our local Grange, residents were grateful to have a voice and many signed it. We urge you to study Measure A. Take a few minutes to look at their website: [cannabisinitiative.org](http://cannabisinitiative.org). We believe you'll vote Yes.

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