

Measure A looks to the future

By Ken Miller

Where, oh where was the environment, or neighborhood, in Mark Lovelace's opposition to Measure A (Times-Standard, Page A4, Feb. 8)? I finally found it: legalization reduced the illegal numbers. But Measure A's reducing the overall cultivation permits from 3,500 to 1,000 apparently doesn't count? The 10,000 sq ft limit in Measure A on new or expanding grows drew derision compared to the California average of 27,000 sq ft, and downright disparagement judged against the 100,000 to million(s) sq. ft. grows down south. His coup de grace was the economic verdict: a meager \$35,000-\$50,000 annual net proceeds from paltry 10,000 ft. grows.

Mark would have us compete on quantity in a market where production capabilities outpace demand — a lot of Cannabis can be grown in relatively small spaces, indoor and out. And that gets to the central issue of Measure A: How do Humboldt (and Emerald Triangle) farmers compete, without disrupting wildlife, watersheds, and neighborhoods?

Most in the grower and user communities, including recreational and medical (the two overlap), share a common vision: terroir, marketing our brand, famous round the world. Many growers already populate this vision, the same ones I knew as a medical marijuana doctor, before it became cannabis.

That's the future Measure A also envisions, but we must first stop the cancerous growth and spread of industrial grows that can transform a place overnight with industrial activities, traffic, greenhouses, water tanks, ponds, sheds, generators, workers, dogs, pollution, tons of plastic, and irreversible habitat fragmentation. All of our streams are already impaired from past economic booms, with salmonids flopping on the banks of extinction, leaving no room for additional impacts.

Measure A promotes 10,000 ft "homestead gardens" precisely because they make good neighbors; and many small innovative gardeners are key to product diversity and quality, yielding a very different and more valuable product compared with that from those 100,000 ft grows that Mark is familiar with. Smaller grows require far fewer inputs like fertilizers and imported soils, and suffer little from the pests and diseases that plague larger monocultures.

Since Measure A hardly affects most current growers, we would continue to have a mix of grows, almost all under an acre or two and many already at or below 10,000. If your homestead garden nets \$35,000, or \$50,000, that's a substantial supplemental income, allowing for other work and family.

Measure A is admittedly aspirational, looking to the future. No new permits could be issued until the current numbers fall. Our cannabis-friendly Supervisors and Planners will interpret any ambiguities in Measure A language in growers' favor. We should focus on marketing our brand in every dispensary in the land, as Measure A, in conjunction with current ordinances, assures the discerning buyers that they are indeed imbibing the "Cognac" of sungrown, water-wise, neighbor-friendly, salmon-safe Humboldt cannabis. Vote YES on Measure A.

Ken Miller is a McKinleyville resident.