

- **Cannabis Cultivation & the Environment**

Lahontan Water Board

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State Water Board
Office of Enforcement



Scope of the Problem



- Marijuana cultivation operations on private and public lands cause enormous harm.
- Marijuana cultivation site preparation activities can cause erosion and stream habitat degradation.
- Unlawful water diversions by those cultivating marijuana can severely limit the amount of water available to the public and wildlife.
- Fertilizers and pesticides used in these sites are often mixed in the water source contaminating streams.

Damage caused by Cannabis Cultivation



- Cannabis Cultivation operations often generate garbage which can end up in our water.

■ Photo By Stormer Feiler,
North Coast Regional Board©

Damage caused by Cannabis Cultivation



- Large Scale Cannabis Cultivation operations often generate runoff containing sediments, pesticides and nutrients which can end up in our water bodies.

Damage caused by Cannabis Cultivation: Unpermitted Timber Conversion



Sedimentation Caused by Grows



- Development of roads and the diversion of streams for irrigation can cause mass sedimentation.
- Photo By Stormer Feiler, North Coast Regional Board©

Erosion Caused By Cannabis Cultivation

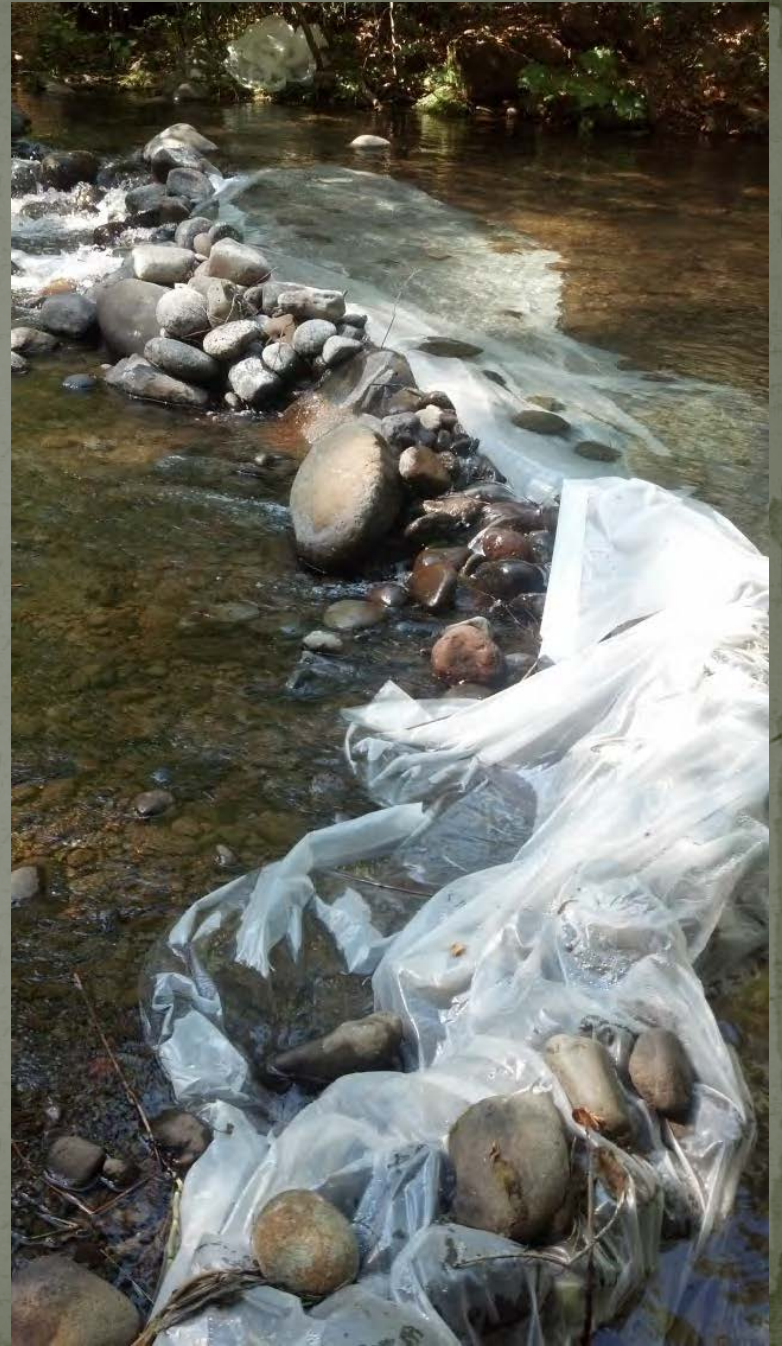


Erosion Caused By Marijuana Grows



Photo By Stormer Feiler,
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Illegal Diversions



Human Waste Near Water



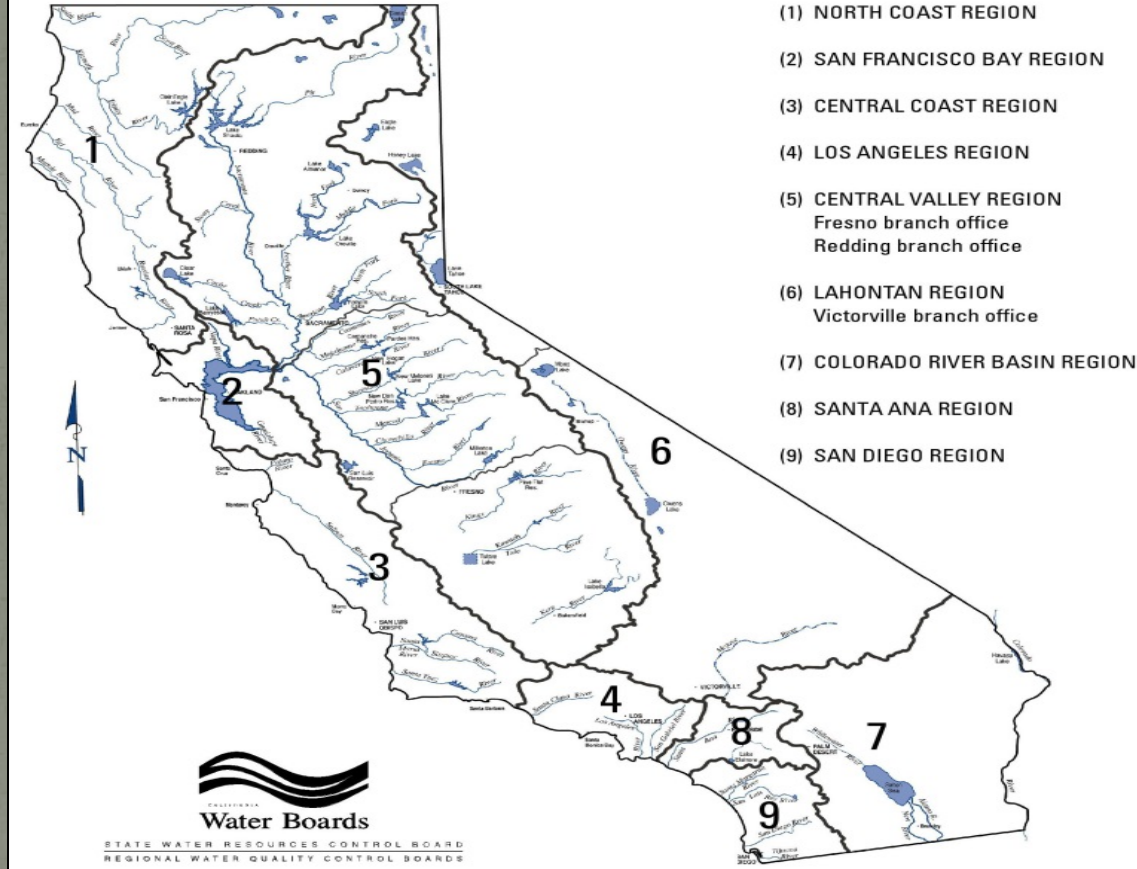


Septic Directly to Stream



State Water Boards' Jurisdiction

California Regional Water Quality Control Boards



Four Keys of Outreach & Compliance

- ✓ Engage in Targeted Enforcement
- ✓ Develop a Regulatory Program
- ✓ Educate the Regulated Public
- ✓ Coordinate with State and Local Agencies

Regulatory Tools

- Storm Water Toolbox: To address Grading Violations but inadequate to effectively regulate marijuana grows
- Basin Plan Prohibitions: Not Financially Viable Approach to Regulatory Program
- Waste Discharge Requirements & Conditional Waivers

Legal Remedies

- **Water Code section 13304:** Cleanup and Abatement Order CAOs -Administrative Civil Liability Complaint (ACLC)
- **Public Lands:** Water Boards Play a Support Role Only- Expertise on Impacts to Water Quality, Supply and Remediation – Per Se Illegal
- **Private Lands:** All the Familiar Water Code Tools – Compassionate Use Act Compliant

Enforcement Challenges

- Owner/Operator claim of legality under Compassionate Use Act
- Viable business entity operator with intent to continue in business, or
- Viable landowner with desire to preserve property value

Considerations for New Program

- Hazardous Waste/Chemical Removal and Disposal Costs, Liability
- Enforcing Illegal Water Diversions (Regulatory tools, Staffing, Statute, Penalties are insufficient)
- Migratory Nature of Growers & Sites
- Program sustainability & fee mechanisms

Questions?

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