



Media Release

North Coast Water Board to Hold Workshop May 7 on Marijuana Cultivation

**For Immediate Release:
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The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board will hold a workshop Thursday, May 7, in Eureka, to gather comments on a draft order for the marijuana cultivation water quality regulatory program.

The draft order would affect marijuana growers on private land in the region.

Unregulated marijuana cultivation poses several potential water quality problems, including soil erosion, discharge of pesticides, fertilizers and petroleum products into streams, dewatering of streams, and damage to stream and riparian habitat, which can harm fish and wildlife.

To address those problems, the draft order would provide a framework for marijuana cultivators to implement best management practices to avoid and mitigate pollution of streams, rivers and groundwater.

Marijuana cultivators would fall within one of the three tiers under the draft order, based on the risk they pose to water quality. The first tier would consist of low-threat grow operations based on size, distance from surface waters, and compliance with defined standard conditions. The second tier would require the cultivators to develop and implement a water resource protection plan to meet standard conditions; and the third tier would require the cultivators to develop and implement a cleanup and restoration plan.

The draft order would require control of erosion and drainage features; proper soil disposal; proper stream crossings; water conservation; proper storage and handling of fertilizers and soil amendments, refuse and human waste, petroleum products and other chemicals; and riparian management and protection.

The draft order is partly in response to direction from the Governor's Office and the state legislature for the State and Regional Water Boards to work with the California Department of Fish & Wildlife to develop a coordinated strategy to address the environmental impacts of marijuana cultivation. The Strategy focuses on Northern California as a pilot area over the coming years.



The Strategy takes a four-pronged approach that includes:

1. Enforcement
2. Development of a regulatory program to control discharges of waste from marijuana cultivation and related activities
3. Education and outreach
4. Inter-agency coordination

The Strategy was developed in cooperation with the staff of the State Water Board's Office of Enforcement, the Department of Fish & Wildlife, and the North Coast and Central Valley Regional Water Boards. "Implementation of this program is critical to protecting our water resources from damaging marijuana cultivation activities," said Matt St. John, Executive Officer of the North Coast Regional Water Board.

The North Coast Regional Board staff has conducted extensive outreach to stakeholders in developing the draft order, including distribution of brochures; speaking at public meetings and to private groups, including environmental, government and grower associations; and participating in media interviews.

The draft order, if successful, could serve as a model for statewide water quality regulation of marijuana cultivation.

The workshop Thursday is informational, and Regional Water Quality Control Board won't be taking action at that time. The Regional Board is expected to consider the draft order at its Aug. 13 Board meeting in Santa Rosa.

Thursday's meeting starts at 9 a.m. in the Wharfinger Building, #1 Marina Way in Eureka. Comments on the draft order may also be made in writing until June 8 at northcoast@waterboards.ca.gov, or at the following address:

North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board
5550 Skylane Boulevard, Suite A
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Information on the Regional Water Board's draft Order can be found at:
http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/board_decisions/tentative_orders/.

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