

To the Oregon Department of Agriculture

To:

Alexis Taylor, Director, ODA

Barbara Boyer, Board of Agriculture

635 Capitol St NE

Salem, OR 97301-2532

Dear Director Taylor and Board Member Boyer,

I am writing to express my grave concerns about the negative impacts the under-regulated hemp industry has on the environmental health of our watershed and our community well-being in the Illinois Valley. This industry poses such an existential threat to our region that it has united our community when in the past, other extraction industries such as logging and mining divided us. This silver lining is remarkable.

Water quality is among my most serious concerns. I have viewed an August 2021 mapped inventory of over 1,000 cannabis and "hemp" grows in the Illinois Valley of which the vast majority have stolen water to irrigate illegal crops. Such extraction has reduced the volume of ground and surface waters, and exacerbated problems with water temperature and algal blooms.

There has also been unprecedented pollution of agricultural water by workers associated with the unregulated grows. They have piled trash and dumped sewage onto the ground, and in many cases, waste has been dumped onto riparian areas and directly into ditches, creeks, and rivers. Furthermore, the industry has been cavalier about the overuse of fertilizers and pesticides which will runoff into the rivers during the winter rains.

While many of the ODA licensed hemp farms failed the HB 3000 testing regime, signaling the use of ODA as a cover to illegally growing cannabis, the much bigger problem by an order of magnitude was the number of grow sites that never bothered to obtain ODA hemp licenses but operated as if they were hemp farms. Some put up fake signs while others verbally claimed they were licensed hemp farms. As the Department of Agriculture, I ask you to regulate all of these illicit farms and enforce the laws of the state without equivocation. I strongly support increased funding appropriations to the ODA for this law enforcement.

Sincerely,
