

To the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

To:

Richard Whitman, Director
Kathleen George, Chair Environmental Quality Commission
Bill Meyers, Rogue Basin Coordinator
Kieran O'Donnell, Compliance and Enforcement Manager

700 NE Multnomah St., Suite 600
Portland, OR 97232

Dear Director Whitman, Commissioner George, Coordinator Meyers, and Manager O'Donnell,

I am writing to express my grave concerns about the negative impacts the cannabis and 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.

Environmental 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 are constructed of PVC piping and plastic sheeting. The map looks like a giant DEQ violation. Now that harvest is complete, these sites are indistinguishable from landfills. Many are left strewn about, others will break apart during the winter, and the rest are currently being burnt in huge burn piles that emit acid smoke and will leach chemicals into the soil and waterways.

There has also been unprecedented pollution associated with unregulated grows. Workers 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. The ODA has received a similar letter to assist in addressing these specific concerns.

Please visit the Illinois Valley to identify the serious concerns noted above and enforce the law to protect the quality of our environment. I strongly support increased funding appropriations to the DEQ for law enforcement.

Sincerely,
