

**To the Oregon Water Resources Department and the  
Water Resources Commission**

To:

Tom Byler, Director

Julie Smitherman, Water Resources Commissioner

725 Summer Street NE, Suite A

Salem, OR 97301

Dear Director Byler and Commissioner Smitherman,

I am writing to express my grave concerns about the negative impacts the unregulated cannabis industry has on the environmental health of our watershed and the community well-being in the Illinois Valley. Unregulated cannabis 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 theft, including municipal sales of water used on illegal cannabis grows, are my most serious concerns. To steal water by using it for nonbeneficial uses at any time, much less during a time of severe drought, are egregious acts I cannot tolerate and I ask the department to enforce Oregon water law. I have viewed an August 2021 mapped inventory of over 1,000 cannabis and hemp grows in the Illinois Valley (many are in my neighborhood) of which the vast majority have stolen water to irrigate illegal crops. How such profligacy could continue unabated is a question many in my community have. However, we are far more interested in water theft being stopped.

Water theft is a key component compounding the illegal activity of growing unlicensed cannabis. Scofflaws extract value from our lands and rivers and our community is left on the hook. The results of this unlawful behavior are legion; they worsen the problem of dry wells, dry creek beds, kill off fish and lead to poor water quality in our rivers. Indeed, the water flows to human rights violations and other attendant evils.

Oregon water law must be enforced against the illegal cannabis grows in the Illinois Valley. I am one of many residents who have listened to enough excuses for why the OWRD cannot or will not enforce the law. I strongly support increased funding appropriations to the OWRD for such law enforcement.

Sincerely,

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