

To Oregon Governor Kate Brown

900 Court Street NE, Suite 254
Salem, OR 97301-4047

Dear Governor Brown,

I am writing to express my grave concerns about the negative impacts large-scale illegal cannabis grows have on the environmental health of our watershed and our community well-being in the Illinois Valley. This unregulated 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 theft and municipal sales of water to illegal cannabis grows are among my most serious concerns. Nonbeneficial use of water by scofflaws during a time of severe drought is an egregious act I cannot tolerate.

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. 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 on a large scale. Scofflaws extract value from our lands and rivers; 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, stolen water flows to human rights violations and other attendant evils. These include code infractions that pose serious public health issues and create ongoing nuisance problems; sewage, trash, fertilizer, and pesticides that have been dumped onto the agricultural and forest lands and into riparian areas in ways no other industry has ever done before; narco-slavery, and the wanton killing of wildlife with poison and guns. The roadways make me feel like we live in the prequel to a Mad Max movie.

I am writing to express my serious discontent with insufficient enforcement against industrial-scale cannabis grows. Please order Oregon state agencies to enforce statutes and rules and work with the legislature to appropriate the necessary funds to those agencies so they can carry out their mandates.

Sincerely,
