



## COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

AGENDA ITEM NO.

H-2

For the meeting of: April 11, 2017

Date: April 4, 2017  
To: Board of Supervisors  
From: Supervisor Ryan Sundberg and Supervisor Estelle Fennell  
Subject: Review of Greenhouse Design for Preserving Prime Agricultural Soils.

RECOMMENDATION(S): That the Board of Supervisors direct staff to review current building codes related to construction of elevated greenhouses with an improved floor on agricultural soil, and return with recommendations for modifying the code, if appropriate.

SOURCE OF FUNDING: N/A

DISCUSSION: Currently, Humboldt County Building Code Section 314-55.43.1.3.2 prohibits greenhouses with improved floors which preclude the agricultural use of the underlying prime agricultural soil. However, Ag Commissioner Jeff Dolf has issued an opinion (see attached letter) on raised greenhouse design and construction methods that, if constructed as proposed, would protect the on-site prime agricultural soils and allow for construction of the raised greenhouses.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: N/A

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT: N/A

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS: Board discretion.

ATTACHMENTS: Letter from Ag Commissioner Jeff Dolf

Signature Estelle Fennell  
Signature Ryan Sundberg

Prepared by Kathy Hayes

REVIEW:

Auditor \_\_\_\_\_ County Counsel \_\_\_\_\_ Personnel \_\_\_\_\_ Risk Manager \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE OF ITEM:

\_\_\_\_ Consent  
\_\_\_\_ Departmental  
\_\_\_\_ Public Hearing  
XX Other Board Initiated (10 minutes)

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No. \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting of: \_\_\_\_\_

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT**  
Upon motion of Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ Seconded by Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

Ayes  
Nays  
Abstain  
Absent

**SEE ACTION SUMMARY**

and carried by those members present, the Board hereby approves the recommended action contained in this Board report.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Kathy Hayes, Clerk of the Board



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
**COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT**  
5630 SOUTH BROADWAY EUREKA, CALIFORNIA 95503  
PHONE (707) 441-5260

March 20, 2017

Steve Werner  
Supervising Planner  
Cannabis Services Division  
Humboldt County Planning Department  
3015 H St.  
Eureka, CA 95501

Subject: **Request for Review of Greenhouse Design for Preserving Prime Agricultural Soils**

Mr. Werner,

This correspondence is in response to an inquiry from Miles Raymer (Norther Emeralds) and pertains to a mixed light permit application (#10566) submitted to the Planning Department's Cannabis Services Division. Mr. Raymer contacted the Agricultural Commissioner's Office seeking an opinion on greenhouse design and construction methods that would protect prime agricultural soils. Specifically, Mr. Raymer is proposing to construct a greenhouse structure with an elevated floor which would provide 1 to 2 feet of clearance between the subfloor and soil surface. The most important practice for protecting prime agriculture soils is that any soil surface covering applied as the floor of a greenhouse be permeable and allow for air and moisture to pass through the covering. Also important is that the native soils not be excavated from the site, replaced or significantly altered in a way which would fundamentally change the character of the existing native soils.

If constructed as proposed, the raised greenhouse would protect the on-site prime agricultural soils by allowing air and moisture to move into and out of the soil surface. The raised design would reduce compaction and the potential for erosion created by disturbance. My review also included a consultation with John Laboyteaux, Humboldt County Williamson Act Committee Chairperson, who is a recognized authority on prime agricultural land and soils. Mr. Laboyteaux agreed that raising the greenhouse floor would offer the above described benefits for maintaining the quality of the prime agricultural soils on the site. Spent soils if disposed on-site should be spread and tilled into the soil surface over a large area and not concentrated in any limited area.

In the future should the agricultural use of the land be used for a different agricultural commodity, the prime agricultural soils can recover and provide the same or similar productive potential that existed prior to construction of the greenhouse structure on the site. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like additional information, 441-5260.

Regards,

Jeff M. Dolf  
Agricultural Commissioner/  
Sealer of Weights & Measures  
CC: John Laboyteaux