

Planning Commission meeting

General Comment for Thursday 2-18-21

Recently I have had reason to research the requirements for cultivation under the 2.0 Cannabis Cultivation ordinance. The requirement for no diversionary water to be used is problematic. The intent of this requirement seems to stem from a desire to protect the rivers and other surface waters from depletion by taking too much for farming of cannabis...an admirable goal. The other option allowed under this law is to pump water from a non diversionary, groundwater well. Unfortunately in the geology of our county such water doesn't really exist. This area doesn't have confined aquifers on bedrock. Even in areas of the arid western states that do have such geology, wells have caused unforeseen disastrous consequences. You all have read of areas where the soil collapses after years of depletion from pumping out the groundwater. Groundwater must be **replenished** by precipitation at a rate equal or greater than it is being pumped out, or the aquifer will fail.

This Ordinance has created the need for many new wells to be drilled in our steep, fragile geological terrain. It may take a few years for the consequences to become apparent. The first results will be drying of the streams and creeks immediately around the wells. This affects the humans and wildlife in the area closest to the wells. I have heard this is already happening here in Southern Humboldt. Next the rivers will shrink. We already have had this experience in the Mattole and the Eel near Rio Dell. As the hill sides lose the subsurface water they will begin to erode. The trees and plants will dry out and die bringing the danger of wildfire to greater intensity.

It seems to me if the Ordinance meant to preserve the environment and the rivers by limiting the water to non diversionary sources then the answer is not to allow wells just by calling them non diversionary. Uphold the intention of the Ordinance and restrict the size of the farms to what the environment can actually support. Perhaps amending the 2.0 to be more like the original ordinance and just allow diversion in the winter months. That would help protect our countryside from the disastrous path we now face with the threat from the withdrawal of groundwater.

Since I seemed to have problems with the connection at the last meeting I am sending this statement ahead of time. I feel strongly the science to guarantee that the many new wells are not damaging to our environment has not been done. We need to know that a well does not remove more water than the current precipitation rate is recharging.

The other element that is not being considered is that the only monitoring requirement is to put a meter on the well. Who is going to record and log the meter readings?

Where are those well logs kept? Are they kept regularly? They should be available to the inhabitants of the area affected by the well.

Thank you for your careful consideration of these important matters,
Susan Jacobsen