



citizens for a
sustainable
humboldt

PRESS RELEASE

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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

CITIZENS for a SUSTAINABLE HUMBOLDT (CSH) and the NORTHCOAST ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER (NEC) have filed a lawsuit in the Humboldt County Superior Court, with claims under the California Environmental Quality Act, the State Planning and Zoning Law, and other laws, challenging the environmental review and permits approved by the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors.

The recent permitting of the Rolling Meadow Ranch project (“Project”), a large industrial Cannabis project near McCann, on the banks of the Main Stem Eel River, has been a great disappointment to us, the neighbors in McCann, local Fire Districts, and many others in the community.

After much consideration of this outsized Project’s ramifications for the environment and

our community, CSH, NEC, and a neighbor of the Project seek to compel preparation of an EIR that will fully analyze and disclose the Project's impacts and proposed feasible mitigation, and will consider alternative designs that can avoid or reduce the Project's impacts.

The litigation includes the following claims:

- Substantial evidence supports a fair argument that the Project may cause significant impacts to the environment (including unmitigated impacts to wildlife, rare prairie ecosystems, and wetlands), thus requiring an EIR.
- The Project's access roads do not meet mandatory requirements under the County's State Responsibility Area Fire Safe Regulations; the Project poses a vastly enhanced risk of wildfire, with inordinate response times from emergency services, as well as numerous traffic safety impacts and public safety issues.
- Wells used for irrigation may impact groundwater resources and hydrologically connected surface water features and dependent aquatic habitat and species.
- The cumulative impacts of the Project, in combination with other projects, including impacts to groundwater resources, biological resources, and wildfire risk, were not adequately analyzed.
- The Project's potential to induce growth in a remote rural area was not adequately analyzed.
- The Project is fundamentally inconsistent with mandatory policies of the Humboldt County General Plan and is also inconsistent with the CMMLUO and other applicable land use regulations.
- The Project's description has been unstable, inconsistent, and uncertain, precluding accuracy in assessing the true scope of potentially significant impacts. Also, development activities (road improvements, well drilling) have occurred on Rolling Meadow Ranch in advance of permit issuance, contrary to CEQA (and County regulations) requiring evaluation of "the whole of the project" in question, resulting in "piece-mealed" analysis.
- The County's failure to follow CEQA and local land use regulations with respect to the Rolling Meadow Ranch Project are part of a larger pattern and practice. Other industrial-size cannabis projects have been approved with wells without investigation of their hydrological connectivity, exploitation of the "Prime Agricultural" loophole, and inadequate road access.

This case is the first litigation of its kind regarding the Humboldt County cannabis compliance and permitting process as it has unfolded over the last five years. The lawsuit can serve as a local legal landmark, and set important precedent that has the potential to shift legislative policy towards more sustainable management of environmental and public trust resources in the context of cannabis cultivation and land use regulation.

