

Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region

Executive Officer's Summary Report
9:00 A.M., Thursday, May 2, 2013
Eureka, California

ITEM: 12

SUBJECT: Environmental Impacts Associated with Marijuana Cultivation in the North Coast Region

BOARD ACTION: This is an informational item. No action will be taken by the Board.

BACKGROUND: With the passage of the Compassionate Use Act of 1996 (Proposition 215) followed in 2003 by the Medical Marijuana Protection Act (Senate Bill 420), the number of observed large scale outdoor marijuana grows on private and public properties has increased significantly. Land development and management activities associated with marijuana cultivation, including tree and vegetation removal; ground disturbance and grading; cut, fill, and terracing on steeper slopes; road construction; stream crossing construction; stream diversions; stream filling; construction of instream ponds and reservoirs; fertilizer, pesticide, and other hazardous materials use and storage; and water withdrawal from surface waters are frequently undertaken without environmental permitting and review. These activities and waste discharges associated with these activities can lead to significant adverse impacts to water quality and beneficial uses, including sediment discharges, deposition, and inundation in watercourses; mass wasting; increases in water temperature; habitat loss; dewatering; and water contamination associated with pesticide and/or fertilizer use. Staff from a number of regulatory and resource protection agencies throughout the Region and the State are working individually and collectively to assess the impacts, and to take action to address and/or minimize those impacts.

DISCUSSION: This item will include short presentations followed by a multi-agency panel discussion. The presentations may include Regional Water Board staff, staff of CAL FIRE, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, United States Forest Service (USFS) Mendocino National Forest, Bureau of Land Management, and National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration National Marine Fisheries Service.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES: N/A

RECOMMENDATION: This is an informational item only; no recommendations are proposed at this time.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: Handouts at Board meeting.