

Outspoke



Reclaiming California's Land From **Illegal** Cannabis Growers

By: Claire Taylor & RJ Falcioni

Known as "trespass grows", illegal cannabis grows are taking place on public lands in California and at an alarming alert.

These trespass grows are most always the work of drug cartels and are one of the leading issues threatening California's wildlife and communities.

As you can imagine, criminals and cartels don't care much about preserving mother nature so the pesticides and herbicides used in these hyper-illegal grows are responsible for contaminating water, killing wildlife and exposing the public to all kinds of toxins.

It goes without saying that the vast majority of cannabis grown in these illegal sites is shipped out of state or used to make black-market vapes destined for the Midwest and East Coast, meaning street buyers are getting dirty weed from dirty sources. While the grows don't directly undercut California regulated producers, they hurt the perception of legal cannabis and hemp markets.

So who's doing something about it? Glad you asked.

The Cannabis Removal on Public Lands or CROP Project is a campaign engineered by the Community Governance Partnership and the California Wilderness Coalition and its leading the charge against trespass growers.

CROP's stated goals are to affect a major shift in policy in order to greatly increase state and federal funding to remove the grows, repair the land and increase the amount of enforcement rangers covering millions of acres of public land in Northern California.

We spoke with Jackee Riccio from CROP and she told us some severely alarming stats which put both the size of the issue and the lack of response from both the state and federal governments into crystal clear perspective.

Of all the statistics Jackee referenced, the idea that the Mendo Forest, which is approximately 1 Million acres, until recently a total of 3 enforcement rangers covering the entire property, was by far the most shocking.

Recently the Mendocino Forest added a 4th ranger, meaning that now each ranger is responsible for covering about 250,000 acres. With that much vastness, its nearly impossible to conceive how the enforcement division could ever put these trespass growers out of business.

With CROP comes hope that both Newsom and the federal government will hear the demands of the people and turn attention and funding to put an end to these crime-funded, pesticide-ridden grows.

With the recent raids throughout the state on unlicensed, private grows, one can't help but wonder why more money isn't put into reclaiming land and catching the dangerous, reckless criminal organizations behind these trespass grows instead of harassing non-violent legacy growers.

Jackee was quit to point out that CROP has nothing to do with the raids on private lands and stresses CROP is only focused on preventing illegal grows on public land.

To aid in their efforts, the CROP Project has created a diverse advisory board including prominent voices from the cannabis industry and elected officials, environmentalists, and members of several government agencies.

Together, CROP is working with local communities, licensed

cannabis businesses and the federal government to change policy and reclaim public lands.

A few months after launching the project, with the help of Senator Kamala Harris and Rep Jared Huffman, a bill called the Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act was introduced and saw its last action in July when a subcommittee meeting was held on the matter.

If you're interested in seeing this bill and CROP succeed, the project's Regional Field Director, Jackee Riccio suggests the best way to help is simply by "increasing visibility" of the project. Follow their Instagram and Facebook pages.

You can also reach out to your state and federal politicians and express your support on the issue; make sure to reference HR 2250 - Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act when you do.

Last but not least, if you're interested in donating to support

the campaign or looking for more information:

<https://www.instagram.com/cropprojectca/>

<https://www.facebook.com/cropprojectCA/>

<https://www.conservativeusa.net/mega-cong.htm#California>

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2250/text>

<https://www.cropproject.org/donate>