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As I travel in any direction into and out of Humboldt County I am amazed at the increasing number of commercial soil distributors throughout the North Coast, which includes Mendocino, Humboldt and Trinity Counties. The sheer number is unbelievable! These enterprises distribute soils, fertilizers, water storage systems, insecticides and other implements of agriculture.

This appears to be a booming industry providing a service that is commodity based, while attempting to establish a standard for how to provide those services to an emerging industry. This industry as we all know is the cultivation of marijuana for medicinal purposes under proposition 215, which was passed by the voters in 1996.

It has taken over 20 years for the California Legislature to finally enact a process and procedure for the cultivation and distribution of medical marijuana. The legislation empowers counties to enact ordinances that provide for cultivation in their jurisdiction. So each of the 58 counties have very different approaches, with some counties not allowing cultivation of medicinal marijuana.

I did some checking locally on the progress of the permitting process of medicinal marijuana in Humboldt County, which is administered through building and planning. Since Humboldt

Counties ordinance was enacted there have been 2300 applications submitted, with 46 of those being approved and permitted to operate. Only 900 of the original 2300 are still active the rest are inactive and have been cancelled.

The estimate of illegal marijuana cultivation sites in Humboldt County in between 8000 and 10,000. 46 currently permitted operations is a small fraction of the grow sites estimated in Humboldt County.

So it would make sense that a large percentage of the sales and distribution of soils, fertilizers and other commodities associated with marijuana cultivation is going to unpermitted, illegal, highly profitable marijuana operations.

~~As I drive by these soil distribution operations I am amazed at the volume of the hundreds of pallets of bagged soil and numerous large piles of mixed soil. This doesn't account for the equally large amounts of fertilizers, insecticides and other commodities that go along with marijuana cultivation.~~

In reality 46 cultivators are operating legitimate, permitted, lawful medicinal marijuana sites. These cultivators have a vision for a sustainable industry under the sanctions provided by the State of California. Sustainable is the key word because most of those who are unpermitted are in it for the high profit only and do not have a vision for a sustainable industry.

In regards to the suppliers of soils and fertilizers, they are responding to market demands a business decision to supply

needed resources. The reality is that the industry is in its infancy and hopefully others will see the benefit in legitimizing their operations but at the rate it is going that reality is not promising.

The questions is where does enforcement enter into the discussion, well that's a topic better left for another time and is very complicated based upon current issues. This has been Mike Downey for community comment

*Retired*