A quick summary of the Sanhedrin Chapter activities around the Mendocino County Medical Cannabis Cultivation Ordinance ~ Jen Riddell

As a rule, we've kept our local chapter’s focus on outreach and education around native plants and plant conservation, not politics. When Measure AF hit the 2016 November ballot, we were asked to take a stance. The Sanhedrin Chapter of the California Native Plant Society doesn’t have a position on medical marijuana, it’s use, or it’s cultivation. Our mission is to educate the public about native plants, their importance to California’s ecological health, and the conservation of native plants and their habitats.

From this conservation perspective, Measure AF would have allowed for development in habitats that we think are ill suited to that purpose, and would have led to the fragmentation of our landscape, further endangering our local ecosystems such as oak woodlands, grasslands, and waterways. The measure also lacked clear, significant, and binding methods to enforce environmental rules. The Sanhedrin board unanimously voted to take a position of “No” on Measure AF in favor of a public process to develop the county ordinance being drafted this fall and winter.

Over the course of the last four months, Sanhedrin has met with other conservation groups and worked on positions related to the draft Mendocino County Medical Cannabis Cultivation Ordinance. We have sent several letters commenting on the ordinance, pushing for strong conservation measures, as well as attending public hearings. We recommended the exclusion of rangeland for cannabis cultivation, in an effort to provide some protection for our counties remaining intact landscapes, including our majestic oak woodlands, and grasslands. We recommended the development of an oak woodland protection ordinance to stem the removal of oaks for development purposes, as well as a grading ordinance to help landowners develop and maintain roads and other projects that minimize harm to our watersheds.

At this date, the planning commission and the board of supervisors have stated that they would like to develop an oak woodland protection ordinance, and accepted rangeland exclusion. However, they are not pushing forward the need to develop a standards based grading ordinance to prevent erosion, siltation of our salmonid bearing waterways, and the prevention of other ecological harms. We are continuing to advocate that the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors develop a grading ordinance for Mendocino County. We are one of the last counties in the state without a comprehensive grading ordinance, and are looking to Lake County as a model for a rural county with clear, concise, sensible rules.

Please let us know if you are interested in the topic by emailing: sanhedrincnps@gmail.com