



Lake County Board of Supervisors
255 N Forbes Street
Lakeport, CA 95453

July, 8th 2025

BOS Agenda Item 6.9: Consideration of Summary of Cannabis Policy Recommendations and Request for Board Direction.

Dear Honorable Chair Crandell and Members of the Board,

My name is Autumn Karcey, and I am a resident of Kelseyville. I am the CEO and Founder of Artemis CoPack, a state-of-the-art co-packing and processing facility located in Lower Lake. In addition, I operate two vertically integrated farms and am launching three in-house brands featuring products from other Lake County cultivators. Recently we just took home an award at the California State Fair for one of our local products cultivated and manufactured right here in Lake County. I also serve on the Board of the Lake County Chamber of Commerce.

First, I want to thank you for your continued commitment to navigating the complex and often burdensome process of California cannabis policy. I also want to acknowledge the work of the Cannabis Task Force. What was initially anticipated to be a six-month effort became a two-year undertaking requiring deep dedication. While members did not always agree, they came together to produce many of the positive and thoughtful recommendations now before you.

The original intent of this process was to align county ordinances with state policy and to establish a sustainable path forward for legal cannabis operators in Lake County. I fully support that mission. However, several concerning developments have since emerged, particularly through the Planning Commission, that threaten to undermine this progress.

Conflict of Interest and Procedural Overreach

A number of the more extreme recommendations some of which have been previously rejected by this Board have resurfaced following the appointment of Commissioner Monica Rosenthal, a founding member of the (CAP) group. During the most recent Planning Commission meeting, Commissioner Rosenthal acknowledged that she was aware of this Board's prior decision not to revisit the Farmland Protection Zone (FPZ) expansion yet stated her personal interest in



advancing it anyway. She also proposed additional restrictions, including required setbacks from homeschools.

This raises serious concerns about potential conflicts of interest. Commissioner Rosenthal has publicly opposed several cannabis projects and has signed CAP letters that advocate for the very initiatives now being reconsidered. It is not appropriate for someone with a history of public opposition to cannabis to cast decisive votes on ordinance recommendations that directly impact the future of this industry.

Farmland Protection Zone (FPZ) Expansion

The proposed expansion of the FPZ would be nothing short of catastrophic. When I did an overlay of all existing farms in Lake County I found it would render approximately 37 percent of the county's currently approved farms ineligible many of whom may be unaware of this proposal and therefore unable to advocate for themselves. This is not a small policy adjustment; it is a wholesale dismantling of one-third of the legal cannabis industry in Lake County.

Arguments that the FPZ expansion is intended to preserve land for food production are not grounded in economic reality. Lake County is not a competitive location for commercial food production. Margins are too narrow, and infrastructure too limited. There is no evidence to suggest that displaced cannabis operators will be replaced by food growers. In truth, these efforts are less about land stewardship and more about eliminating cannabis altogether, without any plan to replace the millions of dollars in lost tax revenue.

Setbacks – Public Lands and Homeschools

I would also like to address the issue of setbacks. During the August 4, 2020 Board of Supervisors meeting, Item 7.2 clarified the 1,000-foot setback requirement from public lands for commercial cannabis cultivation. At timestamp 4:34:50, the Board explicitly stated that the 1,000-foot setback would apply only to developed public lands; such as authorized trailheads, campsites, or visitor centers. Undeveloped and inaccessible public lands would require only a 100-foot setback. Scott De Leon confirmed that the land must be "developed," and Supervisor Sabatier moved to overlay the National Trail Maps to identify developed, designated, and approved trails. The Board unanimously supported this clarification.



Despite this, the final ordinance language is vague and has resulted in inconsistent interpretation. Some applicants have received approvals within these setbacks, while others have been challenged. This ambiguity creates legal risk for the County and uncertainty for applicants. I respectfully request that the ordinance be amended to restore the original intent: setbacks apply only to *developed public lands*.

Further, I strongly oppose the inclusion of homeschools in the list of setback-sensitive uses. There is no standardized oversight or registry for homeschools in California. As a result, this designation would be nearly impossible to verify and enforce, placing an undue burden on the Community Development Department and creating opportunities for abuse. It would allow anyone opposed to a neighboring cannabis project to declare a homeschool as a tool for obstruction. This is not policy; it is weaponization of regulation.

Water Board Setbacks

Lastly, I support aligning local setbacks with the California State Water Resources Control Board standards. The Planning Commission previously voted in favor of this update as part of AM 20-02 and CE 20-15 during its February 25, 2021 hearing. Staff at the time recommended that the County adopt the State's definitions and setback requirements for riparian areas. This update never advanced to the Board. It should be revived and adopted to ensure consistency with the State and reduce ambiguity in how "seasonal streams" are defined.

Existing Non-Conforming Renewals

I respectfully request that all existing cannabis businesses—including cultivation, processing, manufacturing, and retail—be considered eligible for renewal and recognized as legal non-conforming uses under the updated ordinance. Many of these businesses have operated responsibly and compliantly for years, contributing jobs, infrastructure investment, and millions of dollars in tax revenue to Lake County. A business that has demonstrated success and commitment to the community over the course of a decade should be allowed to continue without fear of being regulated out through shifting land use policy. These operators have helped build the foundation of the local cannabis economy and deserve a fair path forward.

Conclusion

The decisions before you are more than regulatory changes, they are choices about the kind of economy and community we want to build. Cannabis businesses have invested millions of



dollars in Lake County, hired local workers, and contributed significantly to public revenues. In 2023, the legal cannabis industry paid 3.4 million dollars in taxes, second only to sales tax in the County's general fund. Removing their ability to operate without offering a viable alternative will have long-term consequences for jobs, infrastructure, and public services.

I urge you to reject proposals that expand the FPZ, add ambiguous or unenforceable setbacks, or move us further away from alignment with state standards. Let us instead focus on building a stable, fair, and economically viable future for Lake County.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Autumn Karcey". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Autumn" and last name "Karcey" clearly distinguishable.

Autumn Karcey
CEO and Founder, Artemis CoPack