

The Impending Crackdown on Greenhouse Cannabis

County Supervisors Move to Tackle Cannabis Odor in Carpinteria Valley

The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors has taken a decisive step to address the long-standing issue of cannabis-related odors in the Carpinteria Valley. On Tuesday, the board unanimously approved a proposal to mandate advanced odor-control measures in the region's cannabis greenhouses. This move signals a significant policy shift aimed at mitigating the "skunky" smell that has sparked thousands of complaints from residents over the years.

The Problem: Cannabis Odor Complaints

Since 2018, when the county embraced cannabis cultivation as a replacement for the declining cut-flower industry, Carpinteria Valley has become a hub for greenhouse operations. However, the rapid growth of the industry brought unintended consequences.

Over **3,900 odor complaints** have been filed with the county.

Residents report pervasive smells impacting quality of life and health.

The lack of enforcement made it impossible to hold specific operators accountable.

Residents, like La Mirada Drive's Merrily Peebles, have grown frustrated. "Seven years is a very long discussion and a long time to live in air pollution," she stated during public comments.

A New Direction: The Supervisors' Proposal

Mandating Odor-Control Technology

Under the new proposal spearheaded by Board Chair Laura Capps and Supervisor Bob Nelson:

All 29 cannabis greenhouse operations in Carpinteria Valley will be required to install **advanced carbon filtration units** ("scrubbers") or equivalent technology.

Growers will have **12 months** to comply, with possible extensions for legitimate challenges like electrical upgrades.

Non-compliance could result in the **revocation of business licenses**.

Eliminating Misting Systems

Currently, many greenhouses rely on perfumed misting systems designed to mask the cannabis odor. However, residents argue these systems create their own unpleasant smells, likened to a “laundromat.” The proposal mandates discontinuing the use of these systems in favor of more effective odor-control measures.

Resident and Community Support

The proposal has been met with overwhelming support from Carpinteria residents and city officials. Many argue that these measures are long overdue.

Valerie Bentz, a local resident, shared her experience of suffering from severe allergies since cannabis operations began. She expressed relief that the board is finally taking action.

The City of Carpinteria requested additional measures, including proactive enforcement to monitor odors throughout the day and evening.

“This oversaturated industry has left an unfavorable connotation on Carpinteria,” Peebles added, emphasizing the need for tighter regulations.

Timeline for Implementation

The board has set an expedited timeline for the proposed ordinance amendments:

January 29 and February 19: Planning Commission hearings to review the amendments.

March 25: Possible board vote on the amendments.

30 days post-approval: The ordinance would take effect.

The California Coastal Commission will have the final say on enforcement, particularly regarding odor violations at property lines.

A Shift in Cannabis Policy

The unanimous vote reflects a broader shift in the county’s cannabis policy.

Oversight and Enforcement

In addition to requiring scrubbers, the proposed rules include measures to ensure accountability:

Testing for cannabis odor at property lines when complaints are filed.

Potential implementation of proactive monitoring to replace the existing complaint-based system.

Impacts on the Cannabis Industry

Cannabis growers face significant changes under the new rules. Of the 20 active greenhouse operations in the valley, only six currently use scrubbers. Transitioning to state-of-the-art systems may involve substantial costs and operational adjustments.

Industry Response

While some growers have expressed concerns about the financial burden, the majority have not publicly opposed the proposal. The board has signaled its intent to enforce compliance strictly, leaving little room for resistance.

Economic Contributions vs. Quality of Life

Since the “Green Rush” began, cannabis has generated substantial revenue for the county. However, the rapid expansion has come at the cost of resident satisfaction. By tightening regulations, the county aims to strike a balance between economic benefits and the community’s well-being.

The Road Ahead

The ordinance amendments represent a crucial first step in addressing the longstanding cannabis odor problem in Carpinteria. The success of these measures will depend on effective enforcement, cooperation from growers, and continued community engagement. Should these efforts prove successful, they could serve as a model for other regions grappling with similar issues.

The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors has demonstrated a commitment to resolving the cannabis odor problem in Carpinteria Valley. By mandating advanced odor-control technology and prioritizing enforcement, the county is taking meaningful steps to address resident concerns while ensuring the cannabis industry operates responsibly.

As the ordinance moves through the approval process, the community will be watching closely to see if this marks the beginning of a “new chapter,” as Chair Laura Capps hopes. One thing is clear: the era of leniency is coming to an end, and a more balanced approach to cannabis regulation is on the horizon.

Email: info@cannabisriskmanager.com | Phone: +415-226-4060

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