

# WATER LEAGUE

*Water League engages the public  
in water stewardship.*

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To: Senate Committee On Judiciary

## **Board of Directors**

Senator Floyd Prozanski, Chair  
Senator Kim Thatcher, Vice-Chair  
Senators Anthony Broadman, Sara Gelsner Blouin, James Manning Jr., Mike  
McLane

*President*  
Gerald Allen

RE: Water League supports SB 162 and the -1 Amendment, which address ongoing issues related to lawful and unlawful cannabis production.

*Vice President*  
Gordon Lyford

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and committee members,

*Secretary*  
Tracey Reed

Water League engages the public in water stewardship because the waters of Oregon belong to all citizens, and they wish to hold water in trust. We recognize that land and water are one system that flora, fauna, and humans depend on.

*Treasurer*  
Linda Pace

Christine Perala Gardiner

My previous experience documenting the negative impacts of cannabis production in the Illinois Valley resulted in a [2022 Cannabis Impact Report](#) that has informed the discourse on policy and bills in this state, on Capitol Hill, and in California. Extensive human rights violations; solid, sewage, and chemical waste violations; rampant and unrestrained water theft from Scenic Waterways; mowed down riparian areas and forests; desecrated class I & II soils paved in gravel; and terrified community members overrun by organized crime syndicates harmed the public health, safety and welfare to an unprecedented degree.

William Joerger

Dan Wahpepah

**Executive Director**  
Christopher Hall

**In Memoriam**  
John L. Gardiner

That report includes market research on how these harms impacted the Illinois Valley community. That community's experience is writ large throughout Southwest Oregon. I can say with reasonable certainty that most Oregonians cheered our state agency officials when they enforced the laws against organized crime syndicates by shutting down their operations permanently. Locking off wells, seizing pump and irrigation equipment, and bulldozing grow sites are


widely popular among Oregonians who live among the mayhem of large-scale unlicensed cannabis grows. Fortunately, the force required by state agency officials to permanently shut down grow sites does not come close to the destructive force of the crimes committed by the scofflaws; therefore, the recent practice of bulldozing sites that state agency officials raid under the authority of search warrants is reasonable.

We support Section 1(4), which authorizes bulldozing hoop houses, and request the permanent destruction of all temporary structures and equipment that cannot be reasonably seized and impounded, including large water tanks. We request you consider integrating the clean-up requirements in SB 326 (2023), which revised ORS 475C.005 to 475C.525, with this bill to ensure the clean-up of bulldozed waste in a timely manner.

We also support Section 2(3)(b), which makes maps of lawfully conforming hemp and cannabis sites available to the Water Resources Department and the Department of Environmental Quality. Crimes related to water theft and waste are rampant features of organized crime syndicates, and our state agencies need to know the status of sites with which they interact.

To clarify reasonable enforcement, we distinguish between the terms *organized crime syndicate* and a *backyard gardener*. For more than 60 years, backyard cannabis gardeners have grown small amounts of cannabis, usually no more than a few dozen plants, in ways that never harmed communities and their watersheds. More recently, many operated under the Oregon Health Authority. However, within just a couple of years leading up to 2021, the acreage in Josephine County nearly quintupled (450% increase) due to an invasion of out-of-state (mostly Northern California) and foreign (mostly Eastern European) criminals. Water League extends our critique and contempt to those who form and operate organized crime syndicates, and we ask your support in suppressing their egregious activities. We are grateful to the Sheriffs of Josephine and Jackson Counties and the Oregon State Police, who have worked with OWRD and DEQ to restore order to our region, which has seen declines in such activities due to their efforts.

Sincerely,



Christopher Hall  
Executive Director