



NOTICE OF PREPARATION DOCUMENTATION AND PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING FOR A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE LICENSING OF COMMERCIAL CANNABIS CULTIVATION IN MENDOCINO COUNTY PROJECT

Date: August 2, 2023

The Department of Cannabis Control (DCC) intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Licensing of Commercial Cannabis Cultivation in Mendocino County Project (the "Project," described later in this document). The EIR will be prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Public Resources Code, sections 21000, et seq., and the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, title 14, sections 15000, et seq.

DCC and Mendocino County have worked in partnership to support provisional cultivation licensees' transition to annual licensure within the County. DCC, which is responsible for the issuance of state commercial cannabis cultivation licenses, will be lead agency in accordance with CEQA in connection with the issuance of such licenses in Mendocino County.

This Notice of Preparation (NOP) has been prepared pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, section 15082, to notify the Office of Planning and Research, responsible and trustee agencies, and other interested parties that an EIR will be prepared. The NOP provides sufficient information describing the Project and its potential environmental effects to allow recipients the opportunity to provide a meaningful response related to the scope and content of the EIR.

The DCC made the determination to prepare an EIR following preliminary review of the Project. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, section 15063(a), because an EIR is needed, an initial study has not been prepared. Probable environmental effects of the Project are described in the attached Project summary.

As specified by the CEQA Guidelines, the NOP will be circulated for a 30-day review period. The comment period starts on **August 2, 2023**, and ends on **August 31, 2023**. The DCC welcomes agency and public input during the review period. In the event the DCC has not received either a response or a well-justified request for additional time by a responsible agency by the end of the review period, the DCC may presume that the responsible agency has no response. (CEQA Guidelines, § 15082(b)(2).)

The DCC requests that comments be submitted in writing, during the review period and addressed to: Department of Cannabis Control c/o Angela McIntire-Abbott, 2920 Kilgore Road, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670 or emailed to: publiccomment@cannabis.ca.gov.

The DCC will hold a virtual scoping meeting at the following date and time listed below:

Tuesday, August 22, 2023 – 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Attendees may participate via WebEx online meeting platform or telephone conferencing. To participate via WebEx online meeting platform please email Charisse Diaz at Charisse.Diaz@cannabis.ca.gov or (916) 465-9025 by 4:30 p.m. on August 21, 2023, to request a link to the meeting. The link to the meeting will also be posted on DCC's website no later than 9:00 a.m. the day of the scoping meeting.

As a reasonable accommodation, limited in-person seating may be available at the scoping meeting in the Department Hearing Room, 2920 Kilgore Road, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670. Attendees must comply with all COVID-19 safety protocols. Please contact Charisse Diaz at Charisse.Diaz@cannabis.ca.gov or (916) 465-9025 by 4:30 p.m. on August 21, 2023, if an accommodation is necessary.

Participants will be given instructions on how to provide oral comment once they have accessed the scoping meeting. The scoping meeting will proceed on the date noted above until all comments are submitted or 12:00 PM, whichever is later. At the scoping meeting, any person may present oral or written statements. DCC requests, but does not require, that persons who make oral comments at the scoping meeting submit a written copy of their comments via email.

PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING

Mendocino County is located along the Pacific Ocean in the northwestern portion of California. The county is bordered by Humboldt and Trinity counties to the north, Tehama, Glenn and Lake counties to the east, and Sonoma County to the south. The county is approximately 2,247,000 acres (including the incorporated cities) (see **Figure 1**).

Mendocino County is predominantly rural, with a majority of its land area consisting of forest and agricultural areas. Approximately 16 percent of the county's land area is under federal, state, and tribal ownership. Development (residential, commercial, office, and industrial) is located within the county's nine unincorporated communities (Anderson Valley/Boonville Area, Round Valley/Covelo Area, Fort Bragg Area, Hopland/Sanel Valley Area, Laytonville Area, Potter Valley Area, Redwood Valley Area, Little Lake Valley Area, and Ukiah Valley Area) and the incorporated cities of Fort Bragg, Point Arena, Ukiah, and Willits.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

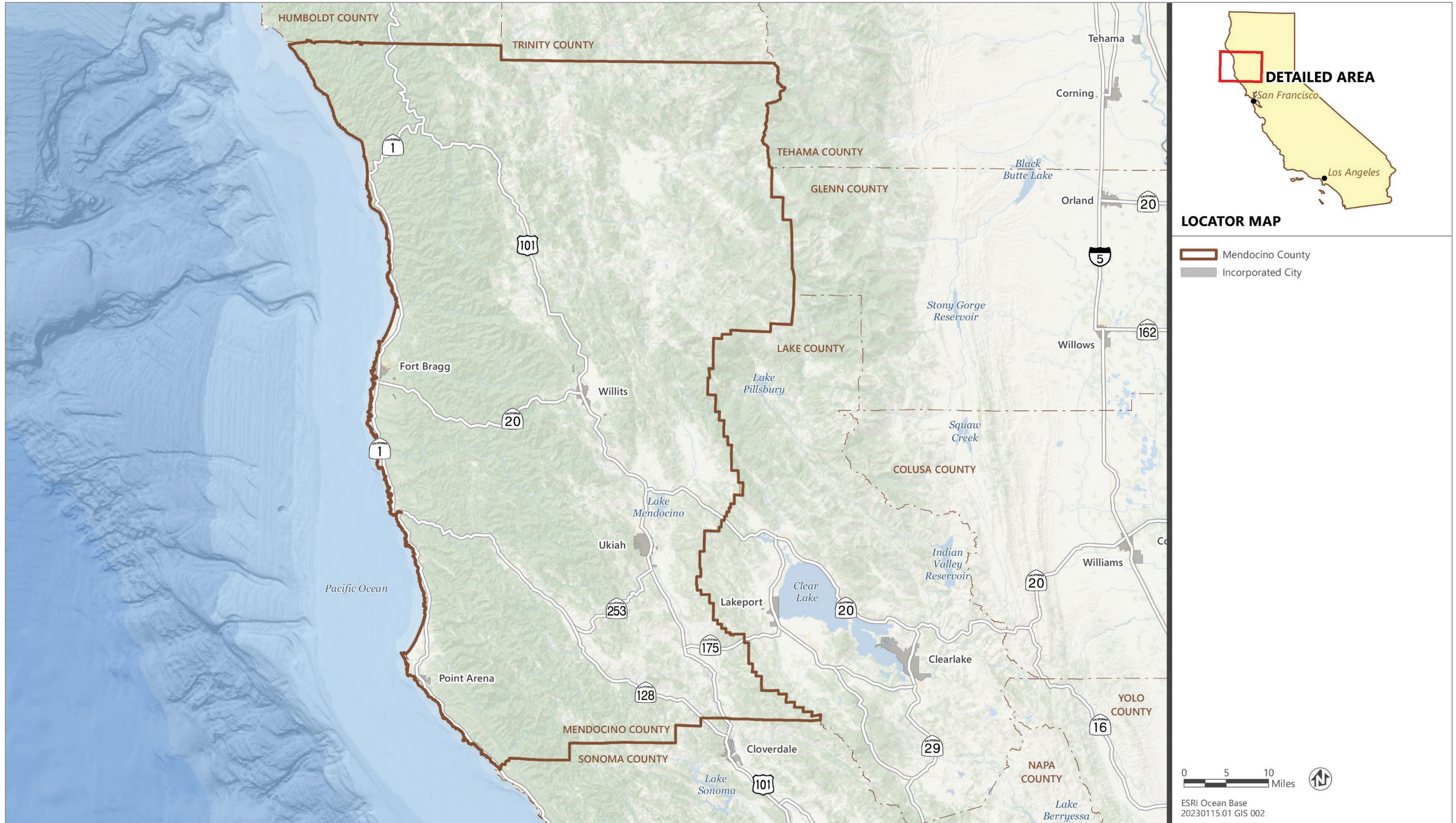
The DCC has issued approximately 608 provisional commercial cannabis cultivation licenses in Mendocino County. The Project consists of the DCC actions to approve annual licensing of such commercial cannabis cultivation operations in Mendocino County under California Code of Regulations, title 4, section 15002.

The EIR will programmatically evaluate the environmental impacts of the DCC's annual licensing of commercial cannabis cultivation operations in the county as well as the environmental impacts of future licensed commercial cannabis cultivation operations.

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The DCC has determined that Project may result in significant environmental impacts; therefore, an EIR will be prepared. Potential issues and impacts to the existing environment to be analyzed in the Draft EIR include the following environmental topics:

- ▶ Aesthetics
- ▶ Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- ▶ Air Quality
- ▶ Biological Resources
- ▶ Cultural Resources
- ▶ Energy
- ▶ Geology and Soils
- ▶ Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- ▶ Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- ▶ Hydrology and Water Quality
- ▶ Land Use and Planning
- ▶ Mineral Resources
- ▶ Noise
- ▶ Population and Housing
- ▶ Public Services
- ▶ Recreation
- ▶ Transportation
- ▶ Tribal and Cultural Resources
- ▶ Utilities and Service Systems
- ▶ Wildfire



Source: Data received from Mendocino County in 2023; adapted by Ascent in 2023.

Figure 1. Mendocino County and Incorporated Cities

The EIR, consistent with CEQA, will include sufficient information to facilitate meaningful public review and informed public decision making regarding the significant effects on the environment that may be caused by the project. The EIR will include information regarding the environmental baseline, including the past, current, and reasonably foreseeable expected future environmental impacts of implementing the project in the project area. Where needed, the Draft EIR will identify potentially feasible mitigation measures to avoid and/or substantially lessen any significant adverse effects identified in the EIR's impact analysis.

The EIR will also address the cumulative environmental consequences of the proposed project in combination with other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects in the area. This will serve to satisfy CEQA requirements regarding potential regional cumulative effects.

In compliance with California Code of Regulations, title 14, (hereinafter, CEQA Guidelines), section 15126.6, the EIR will describe and evaluate the effects of a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project and will compare the impacts of the alternatives to the impacts of the proposed project. The EIR will also identify any alternatives that were considered but rejected by the lead agency as infeasible and briefly explain their reasoning. The EIR will provide an analysis of the No Project Alternative and will also identify the Environmentally Superior Alternative. The alternatives to be analyzed in the EIR will be developed during the environmental review process and will consider input received during the Notice of Preparation comment period.