



April 15, 2024

The Honorable Diane Papan
Chair, Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee
1020 N Street, Room 160
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 2643 (Wood) – SUPPORT
As Amended March 21, 2024**

Dear Chair Papan:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), the League of California Cities (Cal Cities), and California Cannabis Industry Association (CCIA), we support Assembly Bill 2643 (Wood). This measure addresses the critical issue of illicit cannabis cultivation and its detrimental impacts on California's natural resources. Local jurisdictions are on the front lines dealing with environmental degradation from illicit cannabis operators who sidestep regulations and undermine the health and safety of residents and our regulated cannabis businesses. We believe that AB 2643 is an important tool to mitigate the environmental harm caused by illicit cannabis cultivation.

Illicit cannabis cultivation poses a significant threat to the California ecosystem, often leading to habitat destruction, water diversions, and the use of harmful pesticides and fertilizers. Despite efforts to detect and eradicate these cultivation sites, the process of site restoration has been slow. The lack of restoration progress not only perpetuates environmental degradation but also undermines the long-term health and resilience of our natural landscapes.

AB 2643 addresses the critical need for established implementation methods. By requiring the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to conduct a study and create a framework for cannabis site restoration, the bill aims to provide guidance for efforts, building on current eradication and reclamation operations. Additionally, AB 2643 mandates CDFW to facilitate biannual meetings—one at the commencement and one at the conclusion of the cultivation season—with stakeholders, including nonprofits, tribes, and local, state, and federal partners. These meetings will serve as forums to delineate the most effective strategies, frameworks, and workflows, including workforce and data sharing, for identifying, eradicating, reclaiming, and restoring affected lands.

Furthermore, the bill will enhance reconnaissance efforts by assessing the use of new technologies, such as remote sensing and comprehensive mapping capabilities, to

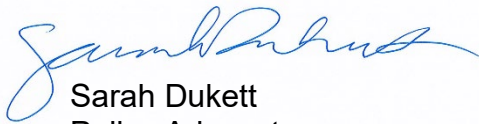
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identify illicit cultivation sites on public lands. Improving data collection and sharing will enable more targeted and efficient enforcement actions.

Recognizing existing budgetary challenges and the imperative need for environmental restoration, AB 2643 will be funded through the dedicated resources of the Environmental Restoration and Protection Account.

In summary, AB 2643 represents a crucial opportunity to address the environmental challenges posed by illicit cannabis cultivation and promote the restoration and conservation of California's natural resources. For these reasons, RCRC, CSAC, Cal Cities, and CCIA support AB 2643 and urge your “aye” vote when this measure is heard before your committee. Should you have any questions regarding our position, please do not hesitate to contact our organization.

Sincerely,



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cc: The Honorable Jim Wood, Member of the California State Assembly
Members of the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee
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