



**REDWOOD EMPIRE DIVISION
MEMBER CITIES**

February 27, 2014

DEL NORTE COUNTY
CRESCENT CITY

HUMBOLDT COUNTY
*ARCATA
BLUE LAKE
EUREKA
FERNDALE
FORTUNA
RIO DELL
TRINIDAD*

LAKE COUNTY
*CLEARLAKE
LAKEPORT*

MENDOCINO COUNTY
*FORT BRAGG
POINT ARENA
UKIAH
WILLITS*

SONOMA COUNTY
CLOVERDALE

DIVISION OFFICERS

PRESIDENT
*JOE PALLA
MAYOR
CITY OF CLOVERDALE*

FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT
*MARIAN BRADY
COUNCIL MEMBER
CITY OF EUREKA*

SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT
*KATHRYN MURRAY
COUNCIL MEMBER
CITY OF CRESCENT CITY*

PAST PRESIDENT
*MARK WHEETLEY
COUNCIL MEMBER
CITY OF ARCATA*

DIVISION DIRECTOR
*MARK WHEETLEY
COUNCIL MEMBER
CITY OF ARCATA*

STAFF

**REGIONAL PUBLIC
AFFAIRS MANAGER**
**LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA
CITIES**
SARA ROUNDS

The Honorable Patti B. Saris
Chair
United States Sentencing Commission
One Columbus Circle N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002-8002

Dear Judge Saris:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the direct threat to our environment and public safety posed by the production and cultivation of controlled substances, in particular marijuana, on public lands or while trespassing on private property. We would like to urge the U.S. Sentencing Commission to take action. This is an important topic in the Redwood Empire Division of the League of California Cities and we are concerned that existing guidelines do not adequately address the long-term and detrimental threats these operations pose to the environment and our nearby communities.

The environmental harms caused by drug operations that trespass on public, resource, and private lands are well documented. The type of damage includes: the wholesale poisoning of wildlife, large-scale alterations to the landscape and fragile ecosystems, illegal water diversions and water pollution, and the dumping or abandonment of fertilizers, pesticides, and other harmful wastes. This environmental destruction is expensive or extremely difficult to remediate and often undoes significant, federal, state, local, and private investment in the landscape.

Rural communities with large ranching, agriculture, and public lands are particularly vulnerable to criminals trespassing to cultivate and produce narcotics. Worker safety is a growing concern, and the reclamation of abandoned cultivation sites can be both dangerous and expensive to landowners. Trespass drug operations can also have a detrimental impact on tourism and outdoor recreation, the primary economic drivers in many rural communities.

As the U.S. Sentencing Commission reviews sentencing guidelines, we urge you to consider the significant impacts of illicit drug cultivation operations on public and trespassed lands and add new enhancements to counter the harmful impact caused to the environment and public safety.

Thank you for your consideration on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Murray
President, Redwood Empire Division
Council Member, City of Crescent City