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## **SYRCL Releases Cannabis Impact Survey Results**

**Nevada City, CA** - The South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) has released the results of its preliminary Cannabis Impact Survey conducted earlier this year.

The purpose of this questionnaire was to gather feedback from community members and cultivators about attitudes and concerns associated with cannabis cultivation throughout the watershed as well as feedback about the compliance process.

“SYRCL was motivated to conduct the survey in order to hear directly from the community—growers and non-growers alike—about any impacts cannabis cultivation may be having on their lives and the environment,” said Melinda Booth, SYRCL’s Executive Director. “Additionally, given the low rate of interest seen for growers to come into compliance thus far, we wanted to better understand any barriers that may be preventing further enrollment.”

Of an estimated 3,500 cannabis cultivators in Nevada County, only around 3% of those growers have come into compliance since the county approved regulations in May 2019.

Response to the survey came overwhelmingly from within Nevada County, with 96% of the 134 total respondents identifying as residents of the county. The remaining 4% of respondents were from Sierra, Placer, and Yuba counties. 62% of those surveyed self-identified as “community members” (do not cultivate), 20% as “hobby growers” (six plants or fewer), and 18% as “cannabis cultivators” (seven or more plants).

Of the 57 self-identified cultivators, only 19% had come into compliance with local regulations and an additional 14% were in the process of doing so. For the majority who were not in compliance, regulatory burden, cost, and lack of trust in government institutions were the primary reasons for not engaging in the process. Forty-five percent of those who had already come into compliance expressed neutrality about the process and outcomes while 35% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied and 20% were satisfied or very satisfied.

Cultivators and non-cultivators alike expressed significant concern regarding the lack of enforcement for large-scale illegal grow operations. The egregious violations found last week by the Nevada County Sheriff's Office (NCSO) Special Investigations Unit (SIU) included many concerns citizens cited in the survey such as discharging waste into public waterways, illegal water diversions, and fire hazards. Survey respondents also expressed concerns related to increased road usage, clearcutting, and smell.

Across the board, citizens noted fear of changes that large-scale cannabis cultivation might bring to the area, from a change in local culture to environmental harm. "Most residents do support cannabis cultivation," said Keiko Mertz, SYRCL's Policy Manager. "But they only support it if it is watershed-friendly, meaning that cultivators implement "best management practices"—methods that reflect the values of this community."

The results of this survey suggest several avenues for increasing compliance in the region—namely, repairing trust and building relationships between those developing the compliance process and constituents, streamlining the compliance process, and greater enforcement of the rules, especially in cases of egregious violations. Moving forward, SYRCL hopes this data will help inform any revisions to the compliance process.

The Cannabis Impact Survey comes as the latest effort in SYRCL's "Growing Green for the Yuba" campaign, an effort started by the organization in 2013 to inform the community about best management practices for how to "grow green," or ensure operations align with watershed-friendly practices that maintain water quality and promote habitat for fish and wildlife.

A summary of the survey report can be viewed [here](#).

**About SYRCL:** The South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL, pronounced "circle") is the leading voice for the protection and restoration of the Yuba River watershed. Founded in 1983 through a rural, grassroots campaign to defend the South Yuba River from proposed hydropower dams, SYRCL has developed into a vibrant community organization with over 3,500 members and volunteers based in Nevada City, CA. See: [www.yubariver.org](http://www.yubariver.org)