



CALAVERAS COUNTY LEADS THE WAY INTO GREENER TERRITORY

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Calaveras County is a beautiful gem tucked away amongst the Giant Sequoia trees in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. It sits between the vibrant Mokelumne and Stanislaus rivers, and as a historic part of California's gold rush and ensuing wild west, writer Mark Twain penned the American classic "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" about the Annual Calaveras County Frog Jump, which continues to this day.

However with a mostly stagnant economy and ravaged last year by the devastating Butte Fire, Calaveras County has seen better days. It ranks in the lower end of the 58 county economies in California and the menacing threat of fire still lingers in the minds of the residents and local businesses, further discouraging economic growth.

But like the Pioneers who came across the high sierras to stake their claim during the Gold Rush, with innovative local government and supportive law enforcement, Calaveras County took a chance and is now blazing a trail and leading the way in California's new Green Rush.

In September 2015, California enacted the Medical Marijuana Regulation and Safety Act opening the doors to the emerging commercial medical cannabis industry and granting local governments the authority to start issuing licenses for commercial cultivation of marijuana and other marijuana related businesses.

Rather than compulsively rushing to adopt an emergency ordinance to prohibit cannabis cultivation like many other California cities and counties did, Calaveras County enacted an emergency ordinance, adding Chapter 17.95 to the Calaveras County Code of Ordinances regulating medical cannabis cultivation and commerce. And it started accepting Commercial Cannabis Cultivation applications.

With fertile soil, a temperate growing season and a long rumored history of cannabis cultivation, Calaveras County knew it would receive a fair number of applications. After all the applications rolled in however, County staff in charge of instituting the application process was overwhelmed when it received 940 applications to grow commercial cannabis in the small county of only 45,000 people.

OUT OF 940 APPLICATIONS RECEIVED, THE COUNTY HAS REJECTED 26 APPLICATIONS, DENIED ANOTHER 27 AND HAS ISSUED 2 LICENSES.

Through the summer, the County staff was swimming in stacks of paper as it processed the applications and sorted out the applicants. It quickly became evident that it was going to take a momentous effort for the limited staff to conduct and complete the application process.

It is still ongoing. Out of 940 applications received, the county has rejected 26 applications, denied another 27 and has issued 2 licenses. However, they have inspected only 61 out of the 940 grow sites as of September 27th (all applicant cultivation sites must be inspected prior to issuing a license.)

But they are doing what would otherwise have seemed impossible to do. The herculean process has cost the County \$304,425 thus far but has generated \$3,717,800 in license fees, a staggering amount in relation to other County revenue streams. Additionally, as a result of the economic windfall, the County has been able to create 29 new county jobs and earmark funds for new, desperately needed county vehicles and equipment.

Calaveras County has shown that although the permitting and regulation of medical cannabis commerce is a daunting task for any city or county, it is doable and can invigorate the economy in a way that has rarely been seen in the West since historic California events like the Gold Rush and the Tech Boom. The Green Rush is here and it is growing fast.

Calaveras County Fact Sheet

(as of September 27, 2016)

Applications:

- 940 applications received.
- 61 sites inspected thus far.
- 2 registrations (permits) issued.
- 885 applications pending.
- 142 of 940 background checks conducted by Sheriff thus far.
- Will increase inspection teams (1 planning department official and one sheriff deputy p/team) from 1 to 3 starting in October.

Denials and Appeals:

- 26 applications rejected.
- 27 applications denied.
- 20 appeals heard following denial.
- 19 appeals denied.
- 1 appeal withdrawn.

Enforcement:

- 27 citations issued following site inspection. (County will provide applicant opportunity to bring site up to compliance if violation is found during site inspection.)
- 35 known unregistered grows.
- 61,467 unregistered cannabis plants destroyed in current grow season.
- 213 cannabis complaints made to Sheriff by civilians during current grow season.

Revenue and Expenses:

- \$3,717,800 generated in license fees.
- \$304,425 in county expenditures during application process.
- 29 new county staff positions authorized
- 9 new county vehicles and equipment authorized.
- County will do fee analysis to determine whether \$5,000 license fee is legal under Government Code.

Miscellaneous:

- 255 Caregiver and Personal Cultivation applications received.
- County will issue applicants business licenses after cultivation permit is issued.
- County will not issue business license if cultivation permit is denied.

(Information cited herein was obtained from the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors website)



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