



DEPARTMENT REPORT

January 2018

Agriculture

California has begun to take applications for commercial cannabis businesses. Temporary licenses are also being issued at this time. Our office has started receiving a new wave of calls from those interested in obtaining a local license to operate a commercial cannabis business, but both Inyo and Mono Counties are currently under a commercial cannabis moratorium. Inyo will bring a draft ordinance for first reading January 9th in Independence. Mono County has staff working on ordinance development.

[Jeff Session rescinding the Cole Memo](#) and four other guidance letters early this month has added even more questions to an already complicated federal/state relationship. The memo didn't specifically make marijuana enforcement a priority, but it gave US attorneys the ability to prosecute these cases again. Currently, the continuing resolution that is funding the federal government includes the Rohrabacher-Farr amendment, which does not allow the federal government to spend money on enforcement of marijuana laws in states where medical marijuana has been legalized. This does not protect recreational cannabis operations, but Nancy Pelosi has promised to bring in new language that would protect both medical and recreational producers and users. HR 975 still also persists ([link below](#)), and may find more support following Session's actions.

Staff will be traveling north soon to become a North American Invasive Species Association ([NAISMA](#)) certified inspector. This weed free forage certification program has become popular with land managers, and on certain federal lands, certified forage is mandatory. Forage certified under this protocol could be verified by our staff, creating an entirely new market for our local hay producers, and fetching higher prices per ton.

We are still waiting to hear back on the potential for county agriculture departments to capture some of the gas tax increases brought on by SB1. Gas taxes end up at our local agriculture departments to support local programs under the assumption that many agricultural producers do not file for reimbursement of taxes they paid on gasoline and diesel that should have been tax free due to the fuel being used for agriculture production. With an infusion of SB1 funds anticipated, county agricultural commissioners have been advocating that these funds should return to counties where they have the most chance of creating benefit for the local producers that paid the taxes. Many counties cut important programs during the economic recession around 2008, or were forced to support these programs with county general funds.

Agriculture Legislation of Interest

[HR 975](#) – Respect State Marijuana Laws Act of 2017

This bill would amend the controlled substances act to remove regulatory and civil, administrative, and criminal penalties for those who are operating cannabis businesses in compliance with state laws. This bill is sponsored by Dana Rohrabacher of California and currently has 24 co-sponsors (12 Democrats and 12 Republicans) from 14 states.



Weights and Measures

Cannabis seems to touch everything right now, and weights & measures is no exception. The California Division of Measurements Standards (DMS) has begun accepting applications for weighmaster certification for cannabis businesses. Weighmaster, as well as other cannabis topics have a dedicated page now on the [DMS website](#).

A weighmaster certification is used when bulk commodities are weighed for sale. One traditional example of this is hay by the ton. Typically, when hay is purchased in Inyo or Mono Counties, a truck will take an empty weight on a scale, and then weigh again after loading to determine the weight of the alfalfa or other hay that was loaded. For this weight to be considered legal for trade, a licensed weighmaster must be involved. Our office audits weighmaster records and inspects transactions from time to time.

DMS personnel visited our counties last month and provided staff with additional training on fuel quality sampling. In addition to this training, DMS also overviewed how to spot credit card skimmers at retail fuel locations. Our staff has been looking for these devices for over a year now, but it was helpful of DMS to bring some of the actual skimmers for us to see and hold. Staff also went to a few local businesses to search for devices. None were discovered.

Mosquito Abatement

OVMAP was recently awarded a \$10,000 grant aimed at increased surveillance of invasive *Aedes* species mosquitos. These are the mosquitoes that have invaded many California counties, and that can carry Zika and other exotic diseases. OVMAP has been actively trapping for these mosquitoes on a very limited scale, but many of our current traps are close to ending their useful life. This grant will replace some of these traps and more than double our total number of traps. This will allow us to trap in more locations. Staff time was included in the grant, and so traps will be checked weekly this season rather than monthly. A small amount of outreach funds were attached to the grant as well and staff will be creating and distributing such materials at a future date.

Invasive Plant Management Program

Staff continues to work on winter projects such as equipment maintenance and repair, finding grant funding opportunities, and planning for next year. Many areas that have had invasive plants present in previous years were flooded in 2017, making access impossible. We expect to see increases in weedy populations due to last season's accessibility issues as well as probable new weedy populations due to seed dispersal via floodwaters.

January Important Dates

January 9

Inyo BOS First Reading
Cannabis Ordinance

January 15

Martin Luther King Jr. Day
OFFICE CLOSED

January 16

Inyo BOS Possible Adoption
Cannabis Ordinance

January 28-31

Mosquito and Vector Control
Association of California Annual
Conference (Monterey, CA)



New full-time ESWMA/OVMAP employee Scott Gadea working on ATVs and attempting to not end up with extra screws after reassembly.