



LOS ANGELES COUNTY
CONSUMER & BUSINESS AFFAIRS

Board of Supervisors

September 15, 2021

Hilda L. Solis
First District

Holly J. Mitchell
Second District

Sheila Kuehl
Third District

Janice Hahn
Fourth District

Kathryn Barger
Fifth District

TO: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Janice Hahn
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

FROM: Rafael Carbajal
Director

Director

Rafael Carbajal

Chief of Staff
Joel Ayala

REPORT BACK ON ENHANCED ENFORCEMENT AGAINST WATER THEFT AND ILLEGAL CANNABIS GROWS IN THE ANTELOPE VALLEY AND ILLEGAL CANNABIS DISPENSARIES IN UNINCORPORATED AREAS (ITEM NO. 10, AGENDA OF JULY 13, 2021)

On July 13, 2021, your Board directed the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs' Office of Cannabis Management (OCM), in collaboration with the Sheriff's Department (Sheriff), and the Chief Executive Office (CEO) to determine the type and cost of equipment that can test quantity levels of delta-9 Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in cannabis, and identify any other resources needed for enhanced enforcement efforts, and report back to this Board in 30 days as to recommended next steps.

OCM provided a progress to date report on August 13, 2021 with information on the collective efforts in collaboration with the Sheriff and the CEO. As mentioned in the previous report, the Sheriff identified a portable analyzer capable of handling ongoing field testing required for effective cannabis enforcement. An additional recommendation for a Liquid Chromatography Mass Spectrometry (LCMS) machine was identified by the Sheriff's Scientific Services Bureau (SSB) in order to enhance the accuracy of field results.

Sheriff Narcotics Bureau: Enhanced Enforcement Efforts

Field Testing Equipment

The LightLab 3 Analyzer will allow law enforcement in the field to confirm THC levels of the cannabis plant and thereby assist in the prosecution and enforcement against illicit cannabis.



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This portable testing device has a lifespan of five to six years and will need to be recalibrated yearly. After the two-year warranty has expired there is an annual maintenance and servicing cost thereafter.

Funding for the Marijuana Eradication Team

Currently, the Marijuana Eradication Team operates without a dedicated budget. The Sheriff's Narcotics Bureau is requesting funding in the amount of \$1,940,000 to operate the Marijuana Eradication Team. Funding for overtime, equipment, services and supplies will ensure that the Marijuana Eradication Team is available to provide continuous enforcement throughout the year, conduct investigations related to outdoor grows, and serve approximately 300 search warrants per year.

Additional Support: Lancaster Station- Patrol

As the number of illegal large-scale grows increase in the Antelope Valley, so do the problems associated with water theft and trespassing on private property. The Sheriff's Department requests funding in the amount of \$503,000 for fiscal year 21-22 to maintain a two-man patrol unit at the Lancaster Station. The two-man patrol unit will increase coverage through overtime for a maximum of 16 hours per day. The additional hours of coverage will provide higher visibility as a deterrent to the ongoing water theft concerns in the Antelope Valley and ensure that the recently eradicated marijuana grow areas are not allowed to repopulate.

Equipment for Field Test Validation

With the recent changes to state ([Senate Bill 153](#)) and federal laws regarding hemp, it is necessary to make a distinction between hemp and marijuana by determining the concentration of THC in a submitted sample of plant material. This type of quantitative testing requires laboratory equipment that the SSB does not currently possess internally.

In addition to the LightLab 3 Analyzer utilized for field testing, the SSB recommends an enhancement to its current in-house testing capabilities through the procurement of the LCMS machine. The LCMS is the preferred method, by SSB, to determine the levels of THC in submitted evidence samples and validate field results.

Benefits of in-house testing includes a reduction in the need for court experts as it allows SSB to develop internal expertise on the equipment and methodology to testify in court. Additionally, LCMS machines are used to identify and distinguish other substances, such as synthetic cannabinoids, psilocin, and psilocybin. Given the rise in popularity of synthetic cannabinoids, the Sheriff believes there may be an opportunity to contract out lab services to other departments and/or jurisdictions. Doing so could potentially create a revenue stream that can offset equipment costs. The Sheriff fully supports the needs of SSB and recommends the purchase of a LCMS machine with required supplies,

maintenance, and training costs of \$399,270.41.

Cost Analysis

The Sheriff's Narcotics Bureau has provided the following itemized cost breakdown :

Sheriff: Narcotics Bureau			Total
Marijuana Eradication Team (MET)	Overtime		\$1,153,000
	Capital Assets ((\$640,000 for 10- 4x4 Vehicles, \$42,000 2- portable Hemp/Cannabis Testers)		\$682,000
	Services & Supplies (Power Tools and Vehicle Fuel/Maintenance)		\$105,000
			Subtotal
			\$1,940,000
Additional Patrol Requested by Sherriff: Lancaster Station	Overtime (FT/Perm)- <i>ongoing funding for two-man patrol fiscal year 21-22</i>		\$503,000
			Subtotal
			\$2.443M
Sheriffs: Scientific Services Bureau			
	Equipment (Instrument, Nitrogen Generator, Expendable Supplies, work bench pump, plus tax)		\$322,045.61
	Support/Maintenance/Service (4 years) Xevo TQ-S		\$66,308.80
	Staff Training/Travel/Per Diem		\$10,916
			Subtotal
			\$399,270.41
			\$2,842,270.41

Next Steps

Your Board's investment in the above equipment and resources will expand the County's ability to combat illegal cannabis grows. Additionally, the OCM will continue to conduct research and collaborate with the CEO and Sheriffs to identify opportunities where other departments can leverage these resources for their cannabis-related programs.

Lastly, per the Board's directive, the CEO will report back during the FY 2021-22 Supplemental Budget with funding recommendations for the Sheriff's Marijuana Eradication Team, additional patrols at the Lancaster station and equipment costs requested to sustain eradication of environmental and quality of life nuisance related to illegal cannabis grows and water theft. The Sheriff's Department will continue to work with the CEO on the Crime Lab portion of the Department's funding and resource request for consideration.

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Should you have any questions concerning this matter, please contact me or Joel Ayala, Chief of Staff, at (213) 712-5491 or jayala@dcba.lacounty.gov; or Hyunhye Seo, OCM Chief, at (213) 974-3540 or hseo@dcba.lacounty.gov.

RC:JA
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c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
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