Upper Salinas – Las Tablas Resource Conservation District

Growing Responsible and Socially Sustainable – Cannabis (GRASS-C)

History of Cannabis Regulations

- Proposition 215 (medical) passed in 1996; Proposition 64 (recreational) passed in January 2016. Washington, Colorado, Oregon, and Alaska other legal states.
- State regulations enacted January 1, 2017.
- SLO County Cannabis Ordinance in effect December 31, 2017
  - Total cannabis licenses = 141 for SLO County
  - Regulate types of operations, locations, and permit requirements

Role of Resource Conservation Districts

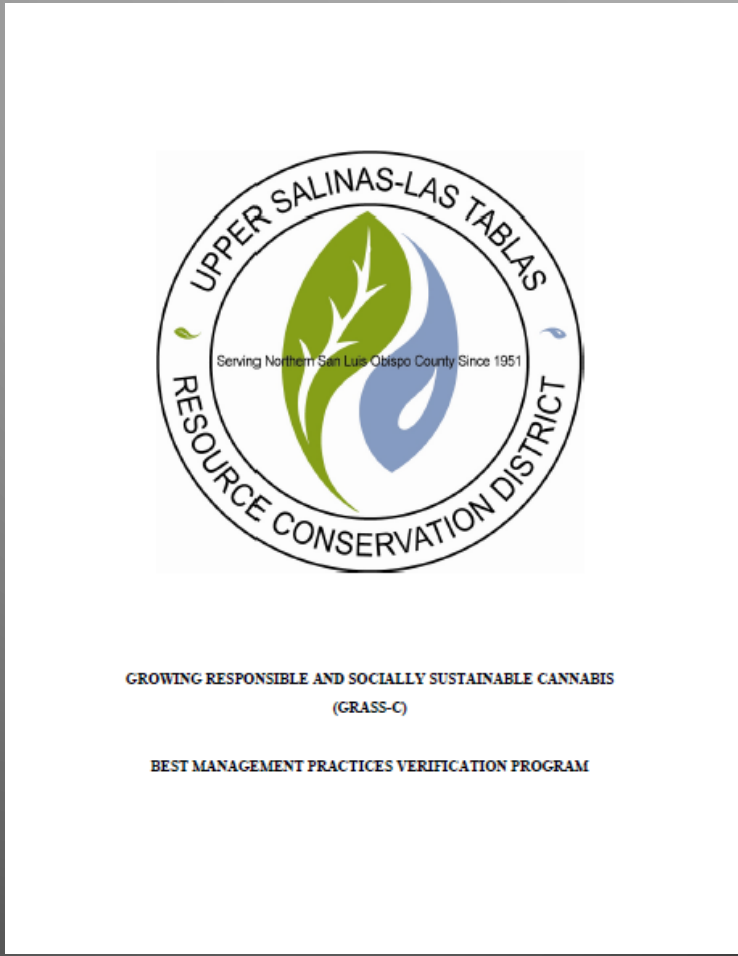
- RCDs are non-regulatory, technical resource providers.
- Annual CARCD conference in Sacramento November 2017, CDFA highlighted the need for RCDs to be involved at some level
- Mendocino County RCD developed "Watershed Best Management Practices for Cannabis Growers and other Rural Gardeners" http://mcrcd.org/resources/publications
- Other RCDs have taken a "wait and see" approach

Upper Salinas – Las Tablas RCD

- Received significant interest from local growers in SLO County to develop a program to incorporate all aspects of agricultural production and sustainability
- Took initiative to develop a “verification” program modeled after SIP
- USLTRCD developed program to be focused on SLO county, yet capable of being adopted to other counties in CA

Growing Responsible and Socially Sustainable Cannabis (GRASS-C)

- Best management practice verification program
- 3 Main Categories: Installation; O&M; and, Workforce
- Guiding principles include: protect, conserve, and enhance natural resources, human concerns for achieving sustainable ag systems, and ecological interactions between operations and ecological communities.



Installation of Growing Operation

- Intent was to ensure the operation considered location, surrounding resource issues, and setup prior to any cultivation
- Broken into land use & conservation measures and planting setup
- Categories include topography, soils, light/sun, access/roads, waterbodies, fish and wildlife resources, cultural resources, power, water use, etc.

Operation and Maintenance

- Consideration of ongoing cultivation for long-term resource concerns
- Divided into Crop Water Use, Soil & Sediment Control, Waste Management, Materials Storage, Pest Management
- Evaluates issues such as organic matter on-site, prevention of soil erosion, identification and management of pests, and storing and disposal of materials

Workforce

- Consider providing a safe and fair working environment for employees in cannabis cultivation.
- Unlike other industries, cannabis has not been through the same human resource personnel training
- Evaluate pay scales, benefits, training, and performance evaluations

Example of the Certification Program

number of hours/day of sunlight is present throughout the growing season. If using artificial light, the operator should have a plan for number of hours of light exposure needed to induce various stages of plant growth.

1. Does the operation use artificial light?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No (2 pts)

2. Has any native vegetation removal occurred to develop a planting area?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No (2 pts)

3. What percent of total grow time is reliant on artificial light?

   ☐ 0-25% (4 pts) ☐ 25-50% (3 pts) ☐ 50-75% (2 pts) ☐ 75-100% (1 pt)

Access/Roads – All access roads need to be installed and maintained to reduce impacts to hydrology and soil by limiting erosion and sediment. Roads should be constructed to avoid watercourses to the best ability. In addition, proper rural road construction BMPs such as those found in the Pacific Watershed Associates Handbook for Forest, Ranch, and Rural Roads (http://www.pacificwatershed.com/sites/default/files/roadsenglishbookapril2015b_0.pdf).

1. Are access roads constructed to minimize erosion?

   ☐ Yes (2 pts) ☐ No

2. Are there signs of riling, ponding, or gullying on any access roads?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No (2 pts)

3. Are appropriate crossings and drainage systems installed?

   ☐ Yes (2 pts) ☐ No

Waterbodies – Each facility should be aware of the waterbodies surrounding their property and have established strategies to protect those resources. For example, operations should have minimum setbacks from various waterbody classifications (*i.e.* perennial, intermittent, ephemeral, or man-made drainage) to reduce contamination of watercourses. United States Fish and Wildlife service provides an online wetlands mapper tool (https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/) that can be used to identify watercourses and wetlands throughout the United States.

1. Has the operation identified waterbodies occurring on site?

   ☐ Yes (2 pts) ☐ No

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2. Have downstream basins been identified?

   ☐ Yes (2 pts) ☐ No

3. Are there established minimum setbacks from waterbodies?

   ☐ Yes (2 pts) ☐ No

Fill in the table with the appropriate waterbody and estimated setback for each.

Waterbody Type	*Total Number	Minimum Setback
Perennial		
Ephemeral		
Intermittent		
Man-made drainage		

*note: calculate the total number of each waterbody type occurring on the property.

4. What is the condition of the setbacks?

   ☐Good (3 pts) ☐Fair (2 pts) ☐Poor

Fish and Wildlife Resources – It is recommended a conservation plan be in place and updated every five (5) years. A Resource Conservation District (RCD) plan or equivalent is acceptable. A grow operation should identify any sensitive fish and wildlife species present on the property and develop conservation practices to minimize impacts. Example BMPs would be incorporating predatory bird stands, protection of stream habitat, preservation of wetlands, and forest/woodland area management.

1. Has the operation conducted any biological surveys or studies?

   ☐ Yes (2 pts) ☐ No

   If yes, attach any surveys or studies.

2. What percent of the property is maintained as non-productive habitat (i.e. native and naturalized grasses, flowering plants, shrubs and trees, edges and corridors)?

   ☐>60% (4 pts) ☐>30-59% (3pts) ☐10-29% (2 pts) ☐<10% (1 pt)

   Attach map marked with percent of property maintained in non-production.

How the program works…

Category	Score
Land Use & Conservation Measures	
Planting Setup	
Operation & Maintenance	
Soil & Sediment Control	
Waste Management	
Soil Management	
Materials Storage	
Pest Management	
Social Equity & Labor Management	
TOTAL: POINTS POSSIBLE: *RANK:	173

Score	Rank
173-165	AA
164-156	A
155-138	B
137-121	C
120-103	D
<102	Cannot be considered for this program

- Grower conducts self-assessment
- RCD follows up to verify information and scoring
- Operation given a rank (AA-D) based on score

Overall ranking score for social equity and labor management and practices:

_____*Points out of 16 Points Possible*

Next Steps

- Review/feedback
- Beta testing w/ sample size of licensed growers (n=5)
- Finalization of verification program
- Implementation
- Review and update accordingly

Local adoption

Regional & Statewide adoption

Questions?

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