



Enforcement News

Landowner of unlicensed cannabis grow site to pay \$410,000 for failure to comply with cleanup order

Unauthorized activities include excavation, burying trash

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SAN DIEGO – The San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board on Wednesday ordered Olivia Yutang Liu, the landowner of an unlicensed cannabis cultivation site, to pay approximately \$410,000 for repeatedly disregarding required actions and deadlines to resolve ongoing waste discharge violations at a 38-acre property near Anza Borrego State Park.

During four site inspections conducted between November 2019 and May 2021, San Diego Water Board Cannabis Program staff uncovered the following unauthorized activities: grading and construction of greenhouses within the channel of an ephemeral stream that diverted its natural course; excavation and burial of trash and debris into multiple pits, some more than 10-feet deep; and discharges of cultivation wastewater, which may contain pesticides and concentrated fertilizers, directly into the stream channel and discharging to neighboring properties.

The landowner repeatedly ignored staff's attempts to contact her to resolve the matter. In February and June 2021, Liu disregarded violation notices directing her to stop cultivating and to remediate the environmental damage on the property. She also failed to comply with the board's August 2021 Cleanup and Abatement Order that required her to submit a restoration and monitoring plan by Oct. 15, 2021. Per the order, she was directed to assess and restore the stream channel and riparian environment, analyze the sediment on the property for contamination, and dispose of all the debris and trash dumped and buried on the property. Additionally, the landowner failed to implement the corrective actions by Oct. 1, 2022.

"The environmental harm that has occurred and is still ongoing at the site, coupled with the landowner's lack of response to our repeated efforts to provide compliance assistance and to the subsequent cleanup order, is unacceptable," said David Gibson, the regional board's executive officer. "Today's decision is necessary to protect our water resources and environment as a whole and should serve as a reminder that we will continue to take enforcement action to discourage these types of egregious behaviors."



This week's action directs Liu to pay the fine within 30 days. If the full amount is not paid, the board could seek a judgment for the unpaid liability from the superior court, which could then be used to attach a lien to the property.

The San Diego region stretches 85 miles of scenic coastline from Laguna Beach to the Mexican border and extends 50 miles inland to the crest of the coastal mountain range. The growing population enjoys a mild climate and numerous water-related activities. However, due to the lack of precipitation, the region imports about 90% of its water from northern California and the Colorado River.