**County of Siskiyou**

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**OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES**

**Bryan Schenone, Director**

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**August 7, 2025**

**Director Nancy Ward**

California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES)

3650 Schriever Avenue

Mather, CA 95655

**Subject: Opposition to Denial of State of Emergency Request – Illegal Pesticide Use in Siskiyou County**

Dear Director Ward,

On behalf of the Siskiyou County Office of Emergency Services and Siskiyou County Sheriff, I write to formally oppose the determination made in your August 4, 2025, correspondence denying our request for a State of Emergency (SOE) declaration related to the catastrophic environmental and public health impacts of illegal pesticide use tied to unlicensed cannabis operations within our County.

While we respect Cal OES's continued coordination and prior enforcement efforts of the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), the Department of Cannabis Control (DCC), and other state agencies, the current and ongoing threat posed by unregulated, highly toxic pesticide contamination has escalated to a level of crisis that exceeds local capacity and clearly meets the intent and spirit of the California Emergency Services Act.

**Key Points of Opposition:**

**1. Immediate Public Health Risk:**

Collaboration with CalEPA and the sharing of detailed information on illegal pesticide use—including Cocktail of insecticides (organophosphates, carbamates, pyrethroids, chlorinated hydrocarbons), fungicides, and herbicides.

Some have never been approved for use in the United States such as chlorthiophos, diafenthiuron, fenobucarb, fuberidazole, isoprocarb, procymidone, and tridemorph and other banned substances—has been documented in and around residential zones. Exposure risks to residents, first responders, and public employees are no longer hypothetical—they are real, documented, and on the rise.

**2. Environmental Disaster in Progress:**

The presence of these pesticides is causing harm to fish, wildlife, livestock, and forest ecosystems. The impact on protected species and water courses within highly publicized watersheds and protected lands constitutes an active environmental emergency.

**3. Insufficient Resources at the Local Level:**

Siskiyou County lacks the technical, operational, and equipment resources to conduct comprehensive soil, water, and air testing, initiate remediation, and ensure public safety. The local Task Force has documented over 700 operational plans with very little DCC collaborations. Referring Siskiyou County to technical assistance without collaboration or centralized coordination falls short of what is required to address the scope of this problem within the County, State, and local levels. Coordination at every level is crucial to prevent an irreversible increase in illegal pesticide usage throughout California and Oregon.

**4. Widening Fiscal Impacts and Emergency Preparedness Degradation:**

Our County agencies’ ability to respond to wildfires, floods, and other emergencies is being compromised by the demands imposed by this pesticide crisis. The illegal cannabis economy and its toxic byproducts are draining emergency services, putting both responders and the broader community at risk. State resources are skilled and specialized and can target environmental degradation without local jurisdictional responsibilities.

**5. Precedent for Emergency Declarations in Similar Circumstances:**

Comparable environmental or public health emergencies—such as toxic spills or contamination events—have qualified for State of Emergency declarations in the past. We respectfully argue that this situation aligns with or exceeds the thresholds in terms of severity and impact.

We urge CalOES to reconsider its decision by re-evaluating the scope of its emergency authority in this matter.

And/or by having current CalOES staff visit Siskiyou County, for an on-site assessment and firsthand account of the appalling ecological damage.

And/or all the release of all State agencies' documented operations, test results, and findings to California's equivalent Federal partners for immediate action.

And/ or lastly, by working directly with the Governor's Office to recognize the escalating and multifaceted nature of this threat to rural public health, ecological integrity, and disaster resilience.

Siskiyou County stands ready to collaborate on any further documentation or action needed to secure the resources and recognition warranted by this emergency.

**Respectfully,**

Jeremiah LaRue

Sheriff, Siskiyou County

Bryan Schenone,

Director, Siskiyou County Office of Emergency Services



**cc:**

* Governor Gavin Newsom
* Secretary Yana Garcia, CalEPA
* Director Nicole Elliott, Department of Cannabis Control
* Director Charlton H. Bonham, CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
* Senator Megan Dahle
* Assemblymember Heather Hadwick
* Siskiyou County Environmental Health Department