

TRESPASS CANNABIS on Native Lands

A RESEARCH BRIEFING



The research team



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● PROJECT GOAL & RESEARCH QUESTIONS



Cannabis Restoration Grant Program (CRGP)



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1

Extent How prevalent is trespass cannabis on Tribal lands — and what does it look like (footprint, cultivation style, land type)?

2

Impacts What environmental, cultural, and community impacts are Tribes experiencing?

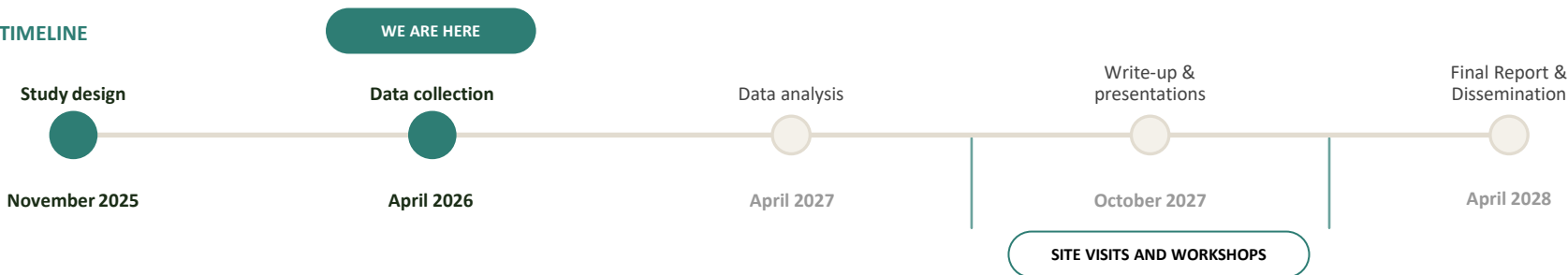
3

Response What are the barriers to prevention, enforcement, and remediation — and what are strategies to overcome them?

4

Funding & partnerships How do we achieve collaborative conservation through stronger Tribal–agency partnerships?

TIMELINE



● DELIVERABLES

MAKE CRGP ACCESSIBLE TO TRIBES



Recommendations report

Strengthening CRGP's awareness of Tribes' experiences, challenges, and priorities.



Grant-process workshop

Improving CRGP's grant materials, application and management process.



Direct CRGP–Tribe connections

Connecting more Tribes with CRGP.

CO-LEARNING ACROSS TRIBES



“By Tribes, for Tribes” workshop

Co-learning and strategy-sharing on trespass cannabis.



Conference presentations

At EPA RTOC and other Tribal conferences.



Other Tribal resources

TBD with Tribal advisors and partners.



Disseminated to broader audiences — through academic publications and website.

Purpose of today's briefing

1



Align on shared purpose

Orient to why we're here and set expectations together.

2



Share what's emerging

Walk through early themes and questions from the interviews.

3



Get your guidance

Receive feedback that shapes the next round of data collection.

How we're gathering evidence



Tribal Advisory Committee

Tribal officers from diverse regions with experience and expertise about trespass cannabis will supervise and guide project through quarterly meetings.



Interviews

34

43 people
20 Tribal EPA and Enviro Staff
6 Tribal-serving nonprofits
2 state agencies



Statewide survey

Tribal EPA and Wildlife Directors and Staff;

Draft in development, launching this fall.



Site visits

Visited Karuk and Robinson this year; aiming to facilitate 2 site visits for CRGP staff.

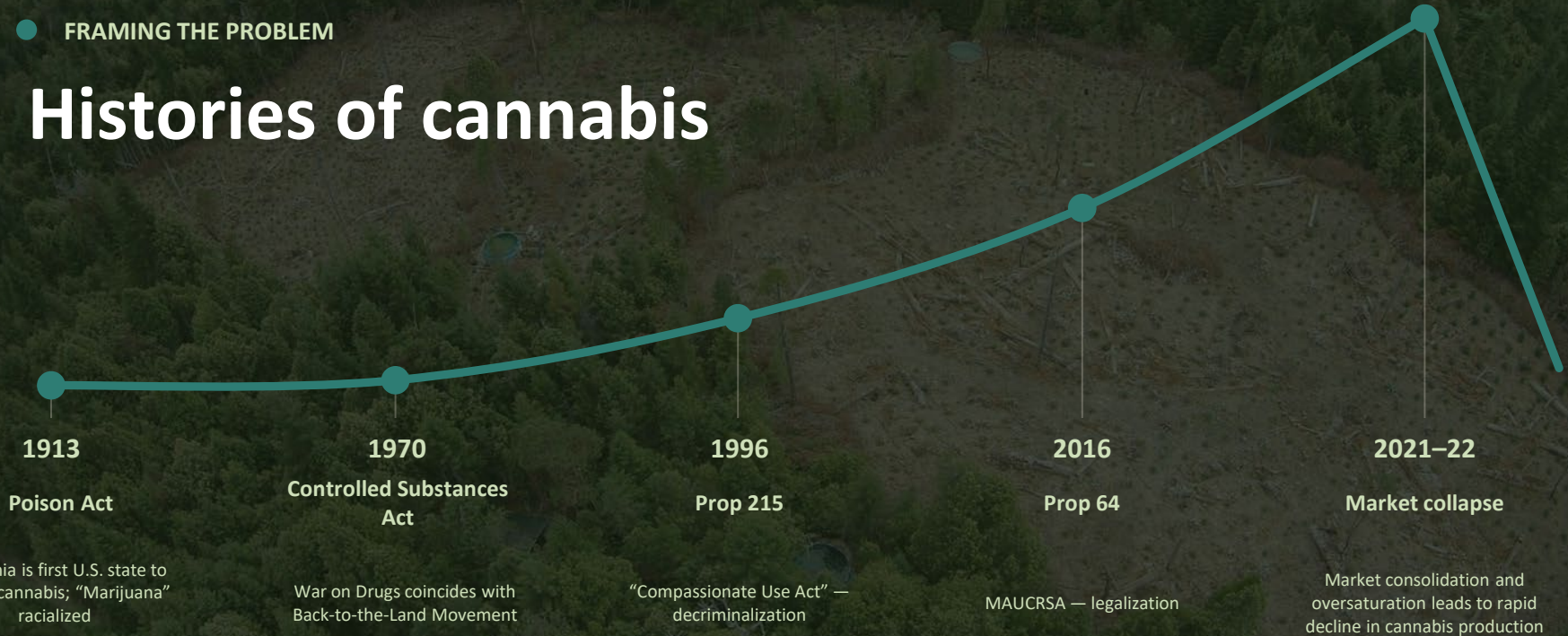


Literature review

Environmental science, Native studies, Legal studies, Political ecology.

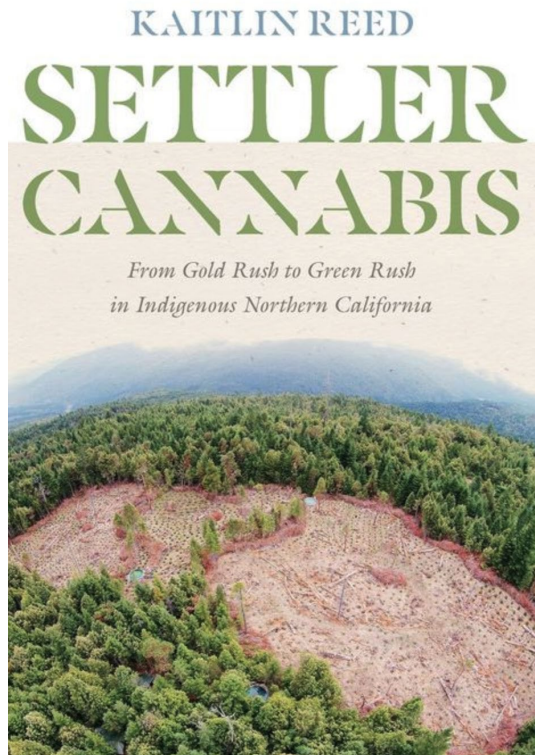
● FRAMING THE PROBLEM

Histories of cannabis



● HISTORIES OF CANNABIS

“The rapidly growing cannabis industry—like the gold rush, timber rush, and fish rush before it—is depleting and damaging critical ecosystems and cultural resources of Indigenous peoples in Northern California.”



REED'S COUNTER-THESIS

- The “Green Rush” is embedded in broader histories of resource-rushing and Indigenous land dispossession
- Ancestral territories and not just “Tribal lands”
- Environmental impacts are cultural impacts

This study builds on Reed’s work...

- Post-market collapse (2021–present)
 - Smaller and more diffuse impacts
 - Abandoned sites
 - Legal cannabis
- Statewide/Regional analysis
- Policy and remediation priorities

● EMERGING FINDINGS

What the interviews and data show



34

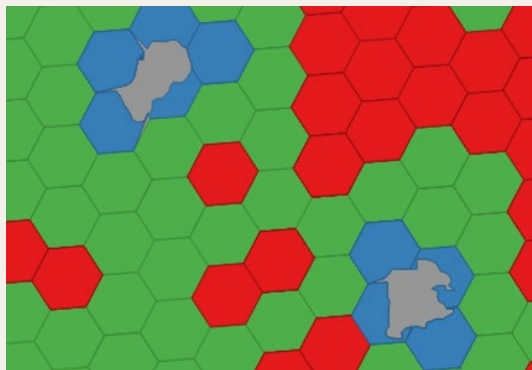
Preliminary themes — shared to get your guidance on where the research goes next.

Tribes bear a disproportionate share of cannabis impacts

3x

more likely to be impacted

Tribal borderlands vs. private and public-private borderlands — Tribes are disproportionately affected.



Tribal lands redaction



Tribal borderlands



Private lands



Public-private borderlands

Stream networks

Denser stream networks predict LESS trespass cannabis on private lands and public-private borderlands, but MORE trespass cannabis on Tribal borderlands. Are Tribal borderlands deprioritized for enforcement?

● IMPACTS

“People who live a lifestyle of being closer to the land — harvesting and eating animals off the land, and fish, and the water systems in rural areas – the impacts on Tribal people and communities are greater than they are with the rest of the population.”

WELL-DOCUMENTED IN THE LITERATURE

● Pesticides, rodenticides, fertilizers, and chemical waste

Including banned chemicals, such as carbofuran, and other cancer-causing agents

● Plastic and human waste

● Water diversions

● Other habitat disturbance

Reservoir & plant pits, roads, tree- and ground-clearing, windrows increasing wildfire risk

FOR TRIBES, THE LENS IS DIFFERENT

Environmental impacts are human impacts, affecting drinking water, food systems, cultural practices, human health and safety.

“Seventy to eighty percent of our drinking water for our community comes from the watershed.”

“It gets into the food web once it gets into the water, and folks are drinking that water, or they're washing their fish in that water, or basket materials and they're putting that in their mouth, so that's a direct human impact.”

“There's a safety issue, too, for those tribal members who use the land for hunting, fishing, whatever. Individuals who do these illegal grows are there. And I know that there's been dads that don't want to take their young out.”

● PREVENTION & ENFORCEMENT CHALLENGES

“They'll say it's a sovereign nation when it's convenient for them.”



- Tribes have no off-reservation jurisdiction but are affected by NPS pollution on private lands and in entire ancestral territory.
- Tribes also lack enforcement teeth on reservation and depend on local law enforcement, which may or may not cooperate or have same priorities/metrics.
- Issues compounded on checkerboarded reservations.
- The bottom line: Fragmented jurisdictions protect trespassers and paralyze response.

● PREVENTION & ENFORCEMENT STRATEGIES

“Tribes have obligations and feel responsibility for their entire ancestral territory, a very small fraction of which they typically have authority over. How do they solve that problem? They have to innovate.”



Patrolling & monitoring

Routine grounds patrol, drones, FLIR (thermal) cameras for plates, checkpoints & access gates.



Access & visibility

Cutting access roads and trails to popular grow areas; thinning forest to open canopy.



Partnerships

County/city law enforcement — e.g. Riverside County Sheriff's Tribal Liaison — and USFS near Forest Service land.



Deterrence via remediation

Removing infrastructure discourages growers from returning.

● TRIBALLY-LED REMEDIATION

“Tribal remediation is totally different — you have to restore the relationship with the landscape too.”

What Tribal remediation aims for

“We see ourselves as stewards of the land, and bringing those sites back to their original purpose — we're just undoing what the people did to it who didn't understand what we were supposed to be cultivating there.”



Human health and safety

The health and safety of Tribal communities are closely linked to environmental health. Environmental restoration serves foremost to protect and preserve Tribal cultural lifeways and community health.



No additional impacts & Restore to purpose

Cultural protocols around sensitive sites; clearing by hand over heavy machinery; “lift and carry out” to avoid further damage.

Culturally important, non-invasive plants; pre-cannabis vs. pre-colonial baselines; restoring a site's ecological & ceremonial purpose.



Whole-landscape & intergenerational

A viewshed, landscape-scale approach with active, continued management — attuned to place and deep time. Ceremony accompanies the work.

The barriers to getting it done



The first question for Tribes is always, 'How are we going to pay for that?'

Capacity & cost

Tribes have trouble covering the costs of restoration. On large land bases, Tribes struggle to monitor or remediate remote grows. Work crews and specialized training may be a barrier.

Access & jurisdiction

The same barriers that limit prevention and enforcement also limit Tribes' ability to remediate or take part in remediation.

No consultation mechanism

No policy pathway to consult outside of environmental review — Tribes must “wedge themselves in” to ongoing agency protocols and processes.



● OVER TO YOU

Reflections · Questions · Discussion

What surprises you? What seems especially important?

What did you question? What left you with questions?

Where would you like to this project go deeper?

Thank you

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PARTNERS · CRGP · Novellus · Northeastern

