

Aloha, a greeting and a farewell. An appropriate concept for Aloha Humboldt, a family owned and run medical cannabis farm grappling with the increasingly legal cannabis market.

BY JASON ROBO

LIKE THE PHARMACEUTICAL drugs medicinal cannabis threatens to displace, the transition to the compliant market has side effects that include property rehabilitation, going with the flow of watershed rules, navigating complex legalese, cultivating a relationship with distributors, and marketable branding that conforms to the law.

Aloha Humboldt's co-owner, Linsey Jones, notes "Many of our friends and fellow cultivators who started the legalization process have had to put their farms up for sale because they can no longer afford the high costs required for permitting." Fortunately Aloha Humboldt has gathered an all-star roster of allies for this entrepreneurial endeavor.

Aloha Humboldt's owners, Linsey and Ryan Jones, are Michiganders who relocated to Northern California in 2002. Linsey became a 215 patient to manage her stress and insomnia. Originally growing indoor on the Humboldt coast, Aloha Humboldt relocated to Willow Creek in 2009. As of 2016 they began leasing a 140-acre parcel managed by Mountain Top Land Management LLC.

Linsey notes that "we've taken on a huge project cleaning up and rehabilitating our property." Like many properties used for growing before the recent expansive regulation of cannabis farms, the use of land is not quite cut and dry. "We have a deep respect for our land and the environment, and take extra care to farm in an environmentally responsible way."

Linsey and Ryan travel often to Hawaii and named their company appropriately to resonate their deep connection to the Hawaiian way of life. Their motto is "Aloha State of Mind."

"We want to encourage that same feeling of love and Aloha through our cannabis products," Linsey explained; this is part of their vision to the legacy of Humboldt County and the Emerald Triangle.

Water Resource Protection Plans (WRPP) are a necessary component to ensure Aloha Humboldt's dreams are not washed away.

Forester Nick Robinson from Timberland Resource Consultants has been an integral asset for Aloha Humboldt. Creating the WRPP is not difficult, according to Nick, but the real difficulty is the amorphous state of the laws.

"Instability in the regulation is what is challenging," Nick notes. Initially a farm can fulfill one requirement, only to find a legal change and more requirements to meet for next year. One shift that looms is from local regulatory oversight to a statewide plan and a focus on discharge to sediment outputs.

Aloha Humboldt has been better than other farms, Nick explains. "Signing up for permitting in the first place is sticking your neck out." Then, he said, come the expensive fixes.

"Sediment is 90 percent of the concerns," Nick points out. Blockages to cold water flows from springs are a favorite spot for fish to hang out in the rivers. Prior to Aloha Humboldt's use of the property, a small landslide plugged a forest service culvert and one site on the property had to be abandoned because it was too costly to maintain.

According to Nick, Aloha Humboldt has "a plan to implement over time that looks promising and they are very proactive about water storage." In respects to run-off, Linsey takes pride that, "Using sustainable, organic growing methods is another way we co-exist and

ALOHA HUMBOLDT STATE OF MIND





cultivate in harmony with our natural environment," she added. "No harsh pesticides or chemical fertilizers are ever used on our plants." Aloha uses TerraVesco Compost Tea supplemented by other organic ingredients that are not bottled, thus cutting down on waste. They also use cover crops in the off-season and use plants that attract beneficial insects.

As if having integrity to be in harmony with the natural world is not costly enough, another investment is in inter-agency intricacies. "Green Road Consulting has been helping us navigate all of the paperwork from the beginning," said Linsey. The seemingly exponentially complex legal requirements for compliant cannabis farming is quite the hurdle in the evolving cannabis. The necessary paperwork filed is the county application and they have almost completed an annual state application. Linsey points out, "All of the fees that go along with compliance are staggering, not to mention the taxes. This has been a hard transition for many farmers and a deal breaker for some."

advertising targets young males, but today Nikki explains, "we are seeing a large portion of seniors and women who are frequenting dispensaries in every legal state." Nikki points out that, "Branding has become paramount to surviving the industry in 2018, which is a foreign concept to farmers who survived the last 40 years of prohibition by staying hidden."

Concocting compliant packaging and branding for Aloha Humboldt in the 2018 season is a task delegated to Graphic Heart Design. Many hours have been invested in collaborating with Shiloh Wislham, Creative Director of Graphic Heart Design. According to Shiloh, "The hardest part for most of the compliant packaging is space with the new warning language required at 6 point font and the new icon."

This creates a transition to larger boxes and bottles that wouldn't otherwise be used. Shiloh further explains that, "it's also been challenging for clients that are small farmers or craft makers to find cost-effective childproof packaging in smaller quantities. The new packaging re-



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BLACK STAR AD



Hoping that other small family farms succeed, Linsey worries about the difficulty in a "growing competitive market and a towering amount of fees and taxes."

Healthy growth in the modern market requires an outlet for Aloha Humboldt's outdoor output. Working with distributors to get their product into dispensaries, Linsey has worked with Arcata's Humboldt Patient Resource Center.

Linsey says HPRC's Nikki Dean, "has been so awesome helping answer my sales questions and giving me direction on where the market is heading." Nikki surmises the situation is dominated by regulations which, "have become very strict and the cost to enter the marketplace this year is higher than it has ever been." She notes that outdoor prices have plummeted in recent years. Meanwhile regulatory costs and low prices, she believes, have forced many smaller growers back underground. Some have sold their farms to green-rush entrepreneurs.

Nikki sees a lacking distribution infrastructure, packaging costs, and lab testing expenses taking their toll. Insofar as market trends, traditionally

quirements have been quite costly for many to transition to."

The California Department of Public Health's emergency regulations have a \$1,000 fee per applicant and annual license fees ranging from \$2-75,000.

Despite the growing pains from numerous hurdles and hardships Aloha Humboldt is rising above it all. They currently have available pre-rolls and 1/8 ounce jars of flower of *Bubble Gum*, *Durban Poison* and *SFV OG*. In 2018 Linsey says Aloha is growing "*Blueberry Cookies*, *Critical Kush*, *Gelato*, *Golden Lemon*, *Headband*, *Lemon Meringue*, *Pineapple Skunk*, *Purple Chemdawg*, *SFV OG*, *Sky OG*, *Sour Diesel*, *Strawberry Banana*, and a mystery strain that we're growing for "The Grow Off" competition." The Grow Off features clones multiple growers cultivate however they like and a winner will be declared after lab testing. Terra Vasco is sponsoring Aloha Humboldt. Keep an eye out for their products!

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