

In the wake of the [successful marijuana legalization efforts in Colorado and Washington state](#), and the success of a [number of legalization initiatives on the ballot in the prior mid-term elections](#), there is a renewed effort to get a legalization measure on the ballot here in California for the 2016 elections. A prior measure in 2010 [lost](#).

As a policy matter, I'm in favor of legalization with appropriate regulatory protections for public health and safety. I think a majority of Californians would be as well. And there is a [task force apparently being organized](#) - with Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom participating - to try and work out the appropriate regulatory framework for any proposed initiative. The idea is to get a thoughtful, well-planned measure on the ballot so that it has both the strongest political appeal, as well as being the best policy to ensure that the benefits of legalization far outweigh any costs. Again, I think this is eminently sensible.

So to the long list of issues that this task force is considering, I have one more item to add: Ensuring that marijuana legalization, at a minimum, does not exacerbate the terrible environmental costs that marijuana cultivation is currently causing here in California. Marijuana growers are [diverting water from streams](#), killing salmon and other aquatic species; [using large amounts of pesticides and herbicides that harm wildlife](#) and endanger public health; [using large amounts of fertilizer](#) that damages aquatic ecosystems; [destroying native habitat](#) by clearing forests and meadows for grow sites; and using [tremendous amounts of electricity](#) for indoor grows. As [Rick Frank](#) and [I](#) have both chronicled on this website, these impacts are serious, and they are getting worse. Personally I can't vote for an initiative that doesn't take address these issues, and I think a failure to address them could be a significant campaign issue for any ballot initiative.

There is time before any initiative drive begins to get these issues worked out. I sure hope someone on Lieutenant Governor Newsom's task force is thinking about them.