

**TRINITY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

APPLICANT: Joel Skaggs & Amy Recca

REPORT BY: John Jelich

APN: 008-020-66

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Variance from required 350' cannabis cultivation setback from a neighboring residential dwelling.

LOCATION: 190 Peach Tree Lane, Salyer, (Exhibit A-1 & A-2)

PROJECT INFORMATION:

- A) Planning Area: Salyer/Burnt Ranch
- B) Existing General Plan Designation: Rural Residential (RR)
- C) Existing Zoning: Rural Residential, five acre min (RR-5)
- D) Existing Land Use: residential
- E) Adjacent Land Use Information:

	<u>Land Use</u>	<u>Zoning</u>	<u>General Plan Des.</u>
North:	residential	RR-5	Rural Residential
South:	residential	Unclassified	Rural Residential
East:	residential	RR-5	Rural Residential
West:	residential	RR-5	Rural Residential

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The urgency ordinance for “Commercial Marijuana Cultivation Regulation” includes a provision reading in part: “Cultivation will not be allowed within 350 feet of a residential structure on any adjoining parcels. Applications for a variance from this provision will be considered by the Trinity County Planning Commission.” (Ord. 315-816; Sec. 32.O.IV (5) (b))

The urgency ordinance defines the term “variance” as: “Variance” is defined as Trinity County Ordinance 315 section 31.” During its November 17, 2016 meeting the Commission spent time discussing both the state and county requirements for issuing a variance.

Each zoning classification and land use has an associated set of development standards, which are specified in the Trinity County Zoning Ordinance. Both State law and the zoning ordinance provide criteria to use in evaluating a variance application. Section 65906 of the California Government Code reads as follows:

"Variances from the terms of the zoning ordinance shall be granted only when, because of special circumstances applicable to the property, including size, shape, topography, location or surroundings, the strict application of the zoning ordinance deprives such property of privileges enjoyed by other properties in the vicinity and under identical zoning classification.

Any variance granted shall be subject to such conditions as will assure that the adjustment thereby authorized shall not constitute a grant of special privileges inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the vicinity and zone in which such property is located.

A variance shall not be granted for a parcel of property which authorizes a use or activity which is not otherwise expressly authorized by the zone regulation governing the parcel of property. The provisions of this section shall not apply to conditional use permits."

Section 31.A. of the zoning ordinance further elaborates on the State's Government Code standards by establishing the following criteria:

In considering a variance request, the following guidelines shall be observed:

1. No special privilege. A variance cannot be a special privilege extended to one individual property owner. The circumstances must be such that the same variance would be appropriate for any property owner facing similar circumstances.
2. Use variance prohibited. The consideration of "use variance" is specifically prohibited. These are variances, which request approval to locate a use in a zone from which it is prohibited by Ordinance.
3. Disservice not permitted. A variance must not be injurious to the public welfare, nor to adjacent properties.
4. Not adverse to General or Specific Plan. A variance must be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Ordinance and cannot adversely affect the General Plan or Specific Plans of the County.
5. RD-1 Overlay Zone. Prior to approval of a variance for property within the RD-1 overlay zone, permission must be granted or deemed not necessary by the Secretary of Agriculture.

Since the cannabis cultivation site cannot be located elsewhere on the property due to the shape of the property, location of wetlands, proximity to other neighbors affecting relocation of the site, the granting of the variance would not be a special privilege for the applicant that could not also apply to other commercial cannabis growers under identical circumstances.

Annual Renewal:

As discussed during previous Commission meetings, variances from the cannabis cultivation setback (350 feet) are issued for a period of one year. (This should be tied to the license effective dates.) The renewal is predicted to be fairly simple and will be performed by the Planning Director or his/her designee. Some factors that would be included in the review would be any complaints received during the previous year, ensuring that the grower is in good standing with the County and State licensing requirements, and that there are no other changes to the property that could affect the continuation of the variance.

PROJECT EVALUATION:

The applicant plans to cultivate cannabis on their 5.0 acre parcel off of Peach Orchard Lane in the Salyer area. The site plan provided by the applicant (Exhibit "B") identifies the on-site development and also shows the distance to the affected neighboring dwelling (008-020-65). The applicants have submitted building plans to construct two greenhouses, shown in purple, which comply with setback requirements; however, due to steep terrain, the additional greenhouses cannot be placed in this location without doing environmental damage. The applicants plan to develop the other two greenhouses, shown in yellow, on the other side of their dwelling which will be closer to the neighboring property to the north. Their desire is to grow cannabis primarily within the greenhouses, although a small patch may be developed near the first two greenhouses (purple) in the future. Refer also to applicant's letter received May 15, 2017 explaining the reason for placing the other two greenhouses away from the steep slope.

Jeff Dickey, Code Enforcement Officer, has reviewed the application and verifies that the topography of the property and the environmental impacts resulting from any additional grading next to the first two greenhouses (purple). The applicants have been working with staff for a couple of months to develop their project site in a responsible manner to be compliant with both State and County standards.

There have been no letters from neighboring property owners opposing the variance request. None of the other review agencies had comments.

ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION:

The project is exempt from CEQA review under Section 15305(a) [minor alteration of land use limitations].

It is consistent with the site's General Plan designation of Rural Residential and, with the exception of the setback, complies with the County's urgency ordinance (315-816.EXT (A1)); complies with all other zoning requirements for the site; and the cultivation area is not located within the 100 year floodplain, will not result in the removal of riparian vegetation, and is not located in an environmentally sensitive area. The project will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment, or contribute to a cumulatively significant adverse impacts. The project will not affect a state scenic highway, cultural or historic resources, federal or state listed species or species proposed for listing, jurisdictional wetlands, or established floodways. The project is not located within a toxic site listed by the California Environmental Protection Agency as provided under Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the following:

Approval of the variance to allow reduction of the cannabis cultivation setback from 350 feet to 250 feet on APN 088-020-66, subject to the following conditions of approval and based on the following findings of fact:

Findings

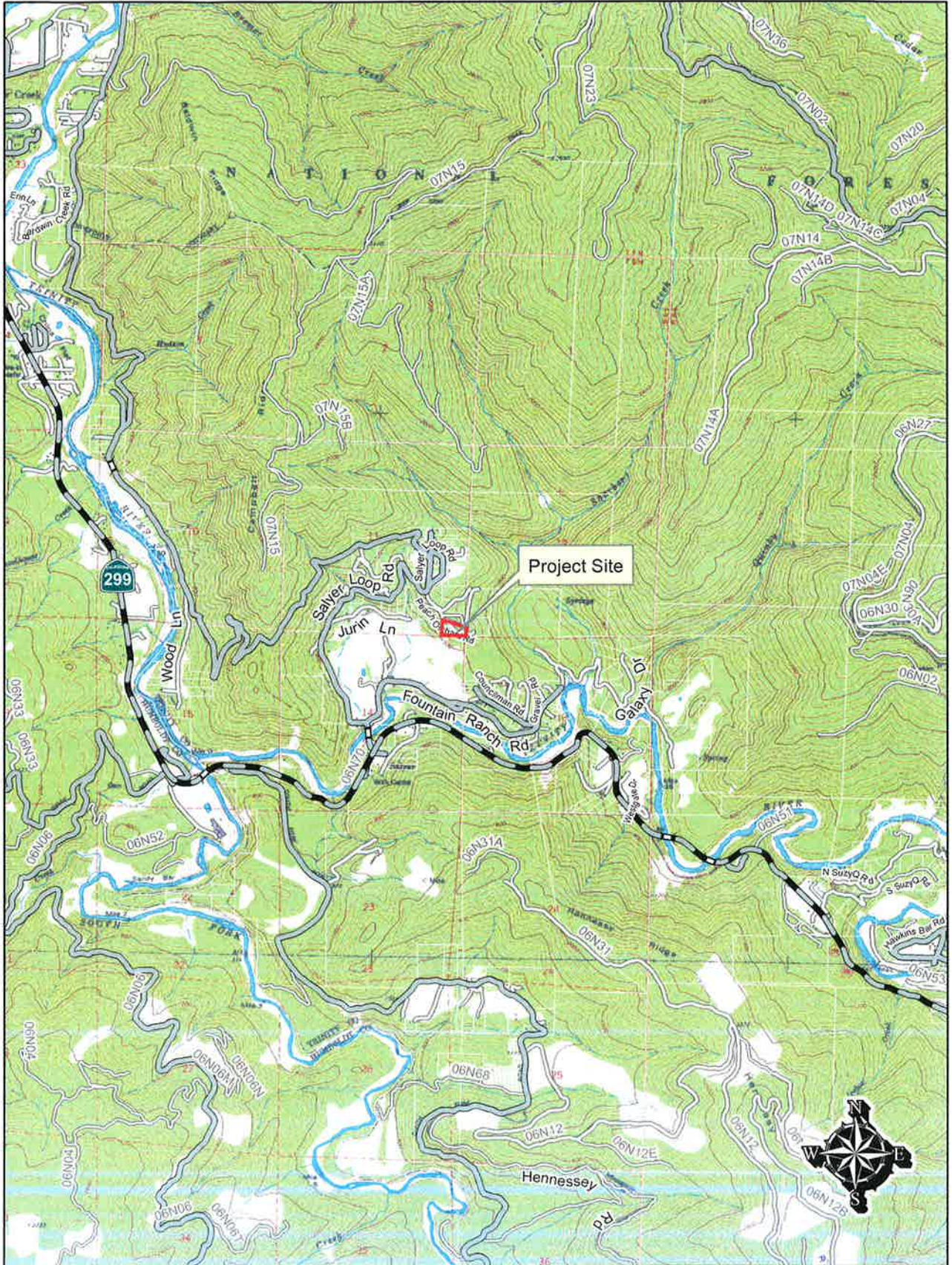
1. There are special circumstances applicable to the property that, with strict application of the zoning ordinance, deprives it of privileges available to other properties with similar zoning in the vicinity that plan cannabis cultivation.
2. The variance is not a grant of special privilege to the applicant because relocation would result in unnecessary grading and environmental damage due to site topography.
3. The granting of the variance is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Ordinance urgency provisions for commercial cannabis cultivation.
4. No opposition from surrounding property owners or review agencies was submitted that would adversely affect approval of the variance.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL
SKAGGS & RECCA CANNABIS SETBACK VARIANCE (P-17-20)

1. The variance is approved for a period of one year from **April 1, 2017** through **March 31, 2018**; provided, however, that the variance may be renewed annually.
 - a. Application for renewal shall be made prior to expiration of the variance, preferably at least 30 days in advance;
 - b. shall not require a formal public hearing, unless specified by the Planning Director or referred to the Planning Commission; however, written notice shall be provided by the County to surrounding property owners at least ten (10) days prior to the Planning Director's decision to approve or deny the annual renewal; and
 - c. shall be subject to a filing fee as specified by resolution of the Board of Supervisors.
 - d. The Planning Director, at his/her discretion, may approve, deny or refer the annual renewal request to the Planning Commission. The director shall not add or modify conditions of approval applied by the Planning Commission. If submitted to the Planning Commission by the Planning Director for action, no additional fees will be required.
 - e. Action to renew the variance by the Planning Director may be appealed to the Planning Commission in accordance with Section 34 of the Zoning Ordinance, including the required appeal fee.
2. The variance shall be subject to the securing of all necessary permits, licenses, and approvals for the proposed cannabis cultivation operation from all County and State agencies having jurisdiction over any aspect the operation.
3. Structures on the property shall be in compliance with the California Building Code and the Trinity County Code.
4. The variance shall become effective after all applicable appeal periods have been expired or appeal processes have been exhausted. The applicant has the sole responsibility for renewing this variance before the expiration date listed above. The County will not provide a notice prior to the expiration date.

PROJECT LOCATION MAP

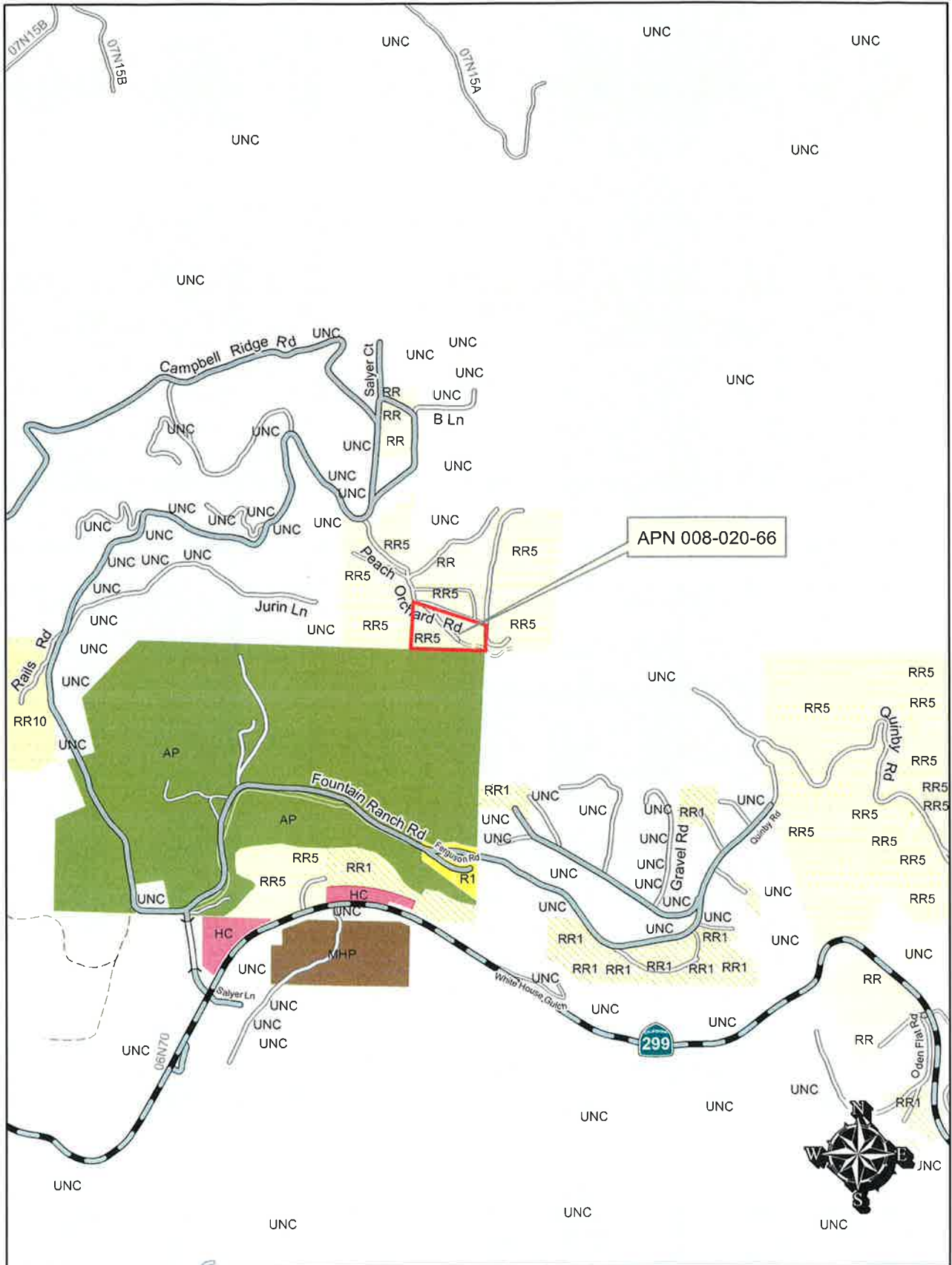
Skaggs & Recca P-17-20



Exh. A-1

ZONING

Skaggs & Recca P-17-20



Exh A-2

Owners:

Joel Skaggs

Amy Recca

Location:





190 Peach

Orchard Ln Salyer

APN #

008-020-66-00



-  = Variance needed (2) greenhouses: (1) 2,400 sf, (1) 1,920 sf
-  = Permitted location (4,800 sq. ft. greenhouses)
-  = Property Boundary
-  = 6 ft wire fencing around cultivation perimeters including locked gate

VARIANCE REQUEST *UPDATE (5/15/17) SEE BELOW*

Homegrown LLC

APN 008-020-66-00

190 Peach Orchard Lane, Salyer

Trinity County Planning Department:

We are sending this to you in hopes that you will consider our variance.

In 2016 we went through the process of getting our Commercial Cannabis permit. The North Coast Regional Water Board visited us and we submitted our application by July 31st which put us in Phase 1. Our initial plan was to put our grow site in our front meadow (see site plan below), but it does not meet the 350 ft. set back from one neighbor. Since the setback did not meet the 350 ft. requirement, rather than requesting a variance, we decided to put our site in our backyard, which would meet the 350 foot set back requirement but it is sloped and requires grading. We met Josh McKnight from Trinity Valley Consulting and he engineered a site preparation plan which would allow us to put the site in our backyard. With this new plan, we were fortunate enough to get our 2016 Commercial Cannabis License, which was issued on January 13, 2017. Unfortunately, we have not been able to use it yet. The heavy rain has stopped us from starting the excavation. Even worse, after going over our preparation plan with Josh, we realized it is going to be difficult to put all four greenhouses, totaling 9,120 sq. ft. (which we already purchased at a tremendous cost), in our backyard without additional grading/engineering.

So when we submitted our 2017 Commercial Cannabis License Application, we also submitted a variance requesting to put one 1,920 sq. ft. greenhouse in our front meadow. Again, this greenhouse would only affect one neighbor, who is also a grower, whose dwelling is 290 feet away from the proposed grow site.

Please keep in mind that we are in good standing with all of our neighbors and do genuinely care about having the smallest environmental impact as possible.

We thank you for your consideration,

Joel Skaggs & Amy Recca

UPDATE: On 5/10 Roger Brown Construction completed our grading. Unfortunately, we can only fit (2) greenhouses on our new flat. There is no feasible way to put more than two. We are now requesting to move (2) of the greenhouses to our upper meadow, making the closest neighbor's dwelling 250 feet away.

RECEIVED

MAY 15 2017

TRINITY COUNTY
BUILDING DEPARTMENT