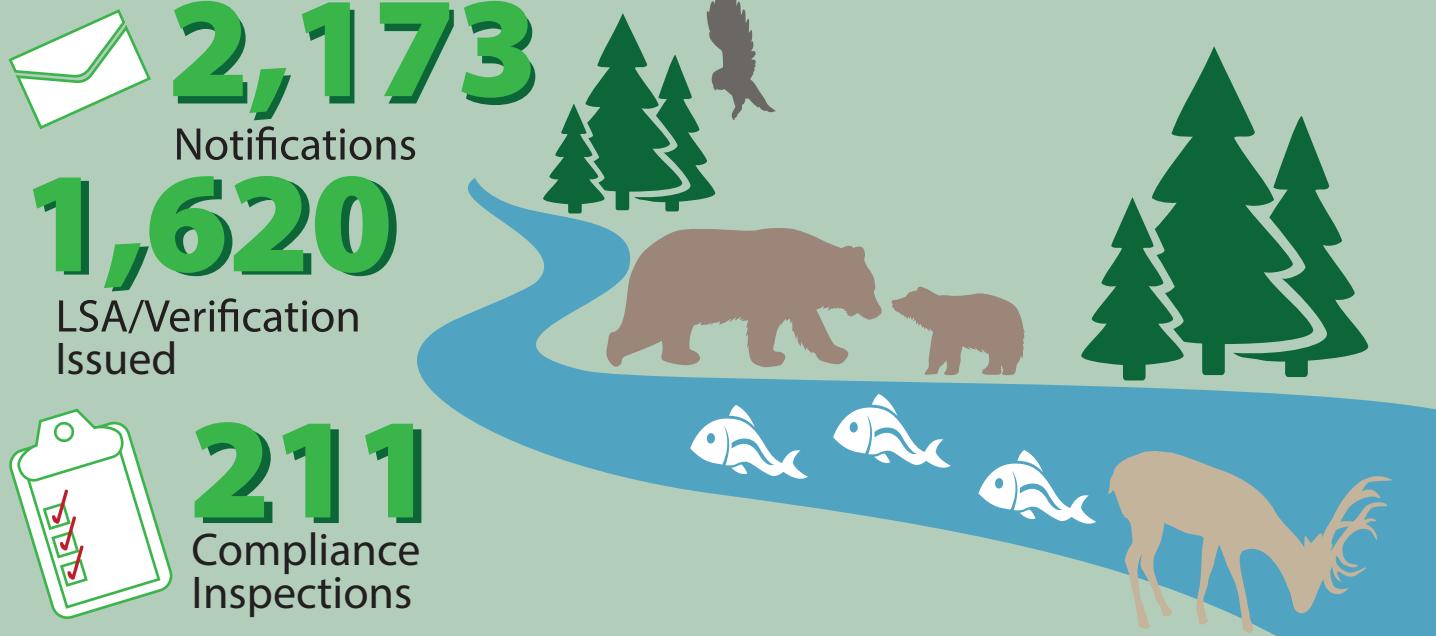




Cannabis Program 2019



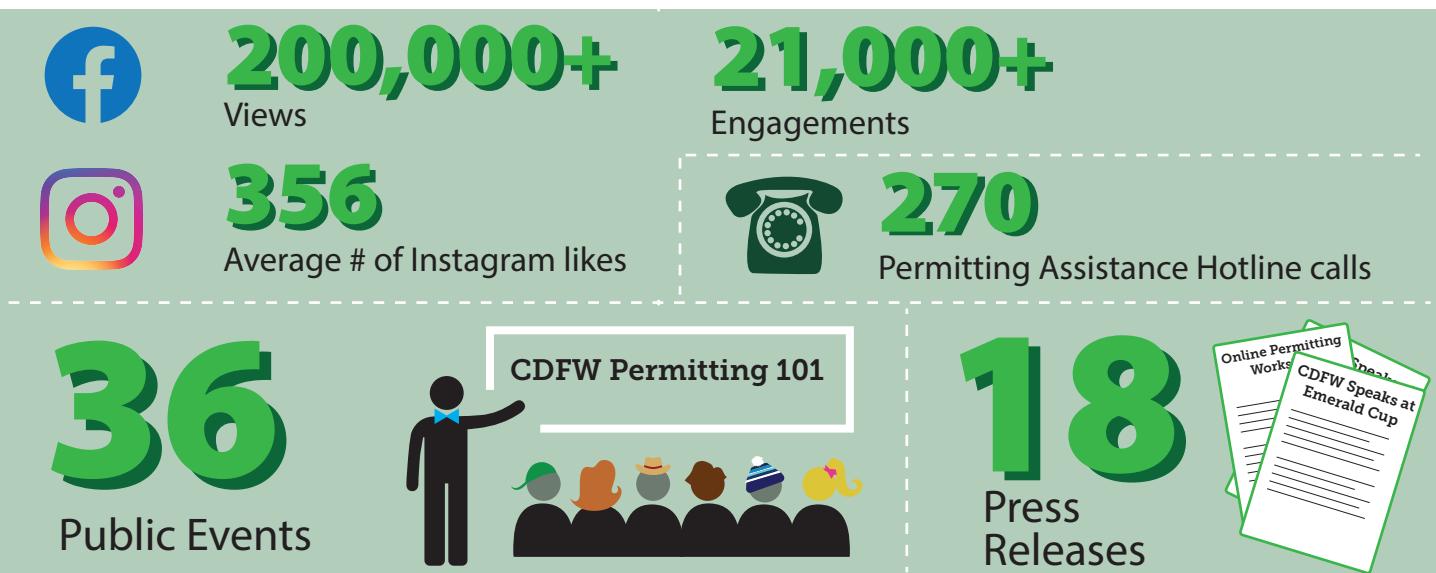
PERMITTING



ENFORCEMENT



OUTREACH



2019 Cannabis Program Summary

With the second year of cannabis legalization in the rearview mirror, the regulated market is taking shape and growing exponentially. The new era of legal cannabis has presented many unique challenges for regulatory agencies.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) plays a critical role in this historic transition through permitting and enforcement activities. CDFW is committed to helping shape the regulated cannabis market and supporting those who are taking steps to be compliant with state laws. Commercial cannabis cultivators must be licensed through the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), which also requires coordination with CDFW. When applying for a state commercial cannabis cultivation license, cultivators must notify CDFW of their proposed activities and either obtain a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement or receive written verification that one is not needed.

In 2019, CDFW hired dedicated program staff to support the steady increase in the pace and scale of cannabis project notifications submitted through its new online portal. The online portal was a valuable tool for applicants, allowing cultivators to track the progress of their application in real-time. In response to this shift away from paper notifications, CDFW created a permit assistance hotline at (833) 303-7467, which fielded over 270 calls in less than six months. The hotline provided cultivators the ability to speak directly with staff about issues related to the online notification system, discuss general permit questions, and seek guidance or get clarification on the notification process and requirements. As a result, CDFW processed over 2,200 notifications from cultivators in 2019.

Along with this, CDFW hosted and/or participated in numerous statewide regulatory permitting workshops with sister state agencies to help new and existing cultivators navigate state regulations. Participation in cannabis industry events further helped spread the word on CDFW's role with cannabis cultivation activities. Eighteen press announcements were issued on a variety of topics including community workshops, enforcement actions, land cleanups and field research.

In coordination with the State Water Boards and CDFA, CDFW facilitated ongoing and increased enforcement activities to help eliminate the illegal market. Through these enforcement efforts, 12 million illegal plants and 148,500 lbs. of processed flower did not enter the illegal cannabis market. CDFW law enforcement also shut down numerous illegal grows on public lands with severe environmental damage, many of which were protected areas for threatened or endangered species.

CDFW also hired new dedicated staff to steward CDFW and partner-owned or managed lands statewide to discourage cannabis cultivation and associated illegal activities on these properties. Staff began assessing the effects of these illegal activities on CDFW lands and implementing clean-up, remediation and restoration efforts.

In 2019, CDFW continued developing a statewide monitoring framework to assess if, when and where cannabis cultivation might have a significant adverse impact on the environment. This effort included a continuation of sampling in the Upper Mattole River

subwatershed in Humboldt County and further development of a scientifically defensible, scalable and repeatable statewide monitoring framework. The framework will provide information that can be used to assess impacts in other watersheds and ecoregions statewide.

Overall, 2019 was a productive and successful year with noteworthy accomplishments and learning opportunities for the CDFW Cannabis Program. Additional program highlights can be found on the accompanying infographic.