



Marin County Sheriff's Office
Bureau of Administration and Support Services
Professional Standards Unit

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Marijuana Eradication Operation- Update

West Marin, CA – The Marin County Sheriff's Office has concluded a marijuana eradication operation that began several months ago when rangers from the Marin Municipal Water District identified a problem on the public lands of the water district and contacted the Marin County Sheriff's Office for assistance.

Yesterday, in collaboration with 142 officers and support staff from numerous other law enforcement agencies, the Marin County Sheriff's Office eradicated almost 7,000 outdoor marijuana plants with an estimated street value of over \$20,000,000. The plants ranged from 2 feet to 5 feet high and were spread over approximately 100 acres in the ridgelines and canyons surrounding Kent Lake. Once agents cut down the plants, helicopters provided by the California Air National Guard and the California State Department of Justice were used to carry the plants to a landing site, where they were loaded onto vehicles for transport to a location where they were destroyed.

Poaching, pollution and habitat destruction are evident in all of these types of illicit operations and this operation was no exception. At the three clandestine cultivation sites, agents found dangerous chemicals including rat poison, fertilizers and insecticides as well as other evidence of hazardous materials. These types of chemicals pose significant dangers to wildlife and to pets, particularly through secondary poisoning. Secondary poisoning occurs when scavenging species eat dead or dying rodents that have been killed by rodenticides. Owls, hawks, other scavenging birds and predators such as raccoons, fox, skunk and coyote are at risk. Pets will also eat dead or dying rodents and unprotected bait. In addition, deer may be attracted to the pellet forms of rodenticides.

These chemicals may also seep into the watershed, causing extensive damage to the public lands and water supplies. Large areas of clear-cutting were located as well as erosion damage, further documenting the resource damage caused by these forbidden operations. Investigators also discovered that the unlawful cultivators had diverted a significant amount of water from natural springs, creating additional hazards and threats to fish and wildlife.

In addition, significant public safety issues are also associated with citizens and visitors coming into contact with these illegal operations on public lands. Not only are the members of these criminal enterprises usually armed with weapons, they often set up improvised diversionary devices that are used to disguise trails and/or injure people. Several of these devices were found in yesterday's operation.

Encampments indicating people were living on the site were also discovered, including tents, food, shower areas, camouflage clothing and miscellaneous personal items. Officers also found ammunition for .45 caliber handguns, which causes additional concern. One suspect in the area when law enforcements officers hiked in was seen fleeing but was not apprehended. No suspects have been identified and no arrests have been made.

The Marin County Sheriff's Office and the Marin Municipal Water District would like to thank the following agencies for their participation in and assistance with this operation:

National Park Service, Drug Enforcement Administration, United States Park Police, California State Parks, California State Department of Fish and Game, California State Department of Justice, California Air National Guard, California Highway Patrol, Marin County Fire Department, San Rafael Police Department, Novato Police Department, Twin Cities Police Department, Mill Valley Police Department, Belvedere Police Department, the Marin County Sheriff's Office Air Patrol and the Marin County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue team.

The Marin County Sheriff's Office reminds the public to be cautious when hiking in outdoor recreational areas. If you come across a marijuana growing operation, immediately leave the area and notify the local law enforcement agency.

Anyone with information can call the sheriff's office at 415-479-2311 or Bay Area Crime Stoppers anonymously at 1-800-222-TIPS and possibly receive a cash reward.