



marijuana on public lands

Office of National Drug Control Policy 2007

Overview of the Problem

Over the past several years, organized criminal organizations have increasingly begun to use American public lands for the cultivation of high-potency marijuana. Fueled by the demand of marijuana users, these criminal groups damage sensitive ecosystems, threaten the safety of visitors, and fund violent drug cartels. Experts indicate that approximately 60 percent to 65 percent of outdoor marijuana cultivation takes place on State or Federal public lands.

Violent criminal organizations (including Mexican drug cartels) are responsible for the majority of marijuana cultivation on public lands. These organizations employ small armies of undocumented aliens or violent U.S. gangs to tend and protect grow operations during the growing season. These groups exploit public lands because their remote locations make discovery of the grows difficult and provide them with immunity from asset forfeiture laws. In response to these threats, Federal, State, and local law enforcement groups are collaborating to effectively reduce the scope of the problem and protect the public safety of Americans.

Marijuana Growers are Placing National Treasures in Jeopardy

- Outdoor marijuana growing operations pose grave dangers to public safety. In the process of protecting their crops, armed thugs often intimidate hikers and campers, employees of public land agencies, and law enforcement agents. They often booby trap their plots with improvised devices containing live shotgun shells.
- Marijuana growers also damage the environment. For every acre of forest planted with marijuana, 10 acres are damaged by toxic chemicals (fertilizers, herbicides, etc..) and diversion of water from streams to the grows. One large-scale marijuana grow-op alone can create tons of garbage, biohazard refuse, and toxic waste. The cost to taxpayers for restoring this land is approximately \$11,000 per acre.

The Federal Government is Taking Action

- In response to these threats, ONDCP has established the National Marijuana Initiative to coordinate Federal, State, and local law enforcement efforts against illegal marijuana grows. These agencies are collaborating to target, disrupt, and dismantle marijuana growing operations in seven states: California, Kentucky, Hawaii, Oregon, Tennessee, Washington and West Virginia. In 2007, these agencies eradicated more than 6.8 million marijuana plants.
- ONDCP is currently providing \$3.5 million in supplemental funding for the support of eradication efforts in these states. The Department of Justice (DOJ) has also allocated \$15 million to support a nationwide Domestic Cannabis Eradication Suppression Program.
- The National Guard is also providing critical support for aerial eradication operations. In 2007, the National Guard provided over 8,800 hours in support of these efforts.





marijuana on public lands

Office of National Drug Control Policy 2007

States Where Eradication Efforts are Being Focused

