



NEWS RELEASE

Sequoia National Forest and the Giant Sequoia National Monument

1839 S. Newcomb Street, Porterville, CA 93257

Centennial 1908 - 2008

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For Immediate Release

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Monumental Outlook Over The Horizon

(What's Happening on the Sequoia National Forest/Giant Sequoia National Monument)

Porterville, Calif..... Hello Sequoia National Forest/Giant Sequoia National Monument Stakeholders!

Last month the Forest embarked on another cleanup event. This time though the cleanup did not remove trash along a trail, or along the Tule or Kern Rivers. This cleanup event occurred in the backcountry in the Domeland Wilderness Area, an extremely rugged country known for its many granite domes and unique geological formations. To accomplish this event, the forest utilized volunteers along with assistance from our law enforcement staff, a National Guard helicopter, and the Kern County Sheriffs Office.

The cleanup effort occurred during the week of October 12. Approximately twenty volunteers cleaned up twelve marijuana gardens that had been found. These gardens were located in rough terrain, up numerous drainages, and at higher elevations (one garden was found at 6,000 feet up the mountain).

As of September 8, 2008, 462,875 plants in sixty-three gardens were eradicated from the Sequoia National Forest and Giant Sequoia National Monument in Fresno, Tulare, and Kern Counties, respectively. The previous high plant count was 294,727 which were found and removed from production in 2007.

Through joint efforts between the various law enforcement agencies operating in Kern County (Forest Service Law Enforcement, National Guard, Kern County Sheriffs, California Highway Patrol) there have been numerous arrests to remove this criminal activity on national forest system lands. Forest Service Law Enforcement staff continue to work across the State of California to increase patrols and find marijuana gardens as they become established. The marijuana growing season is coming to a close as winter approaches, thus law enforcement efforts are increasing as opportunities arise.

Once a marijuana garden is found and the criminal element removed, the Forest tries to cleanup the garden to remove the large amount of chemicals and trash that is left. Many people don't realize how difficult this is to get into a rugged mountainous area to clean it up, as well as, the type of chemicals that remain that affect our waterways. Many of these chemicals are not certified and can pollute the water, harm wildlife, or infect the soil.

Marijuana activity on public lands continues to increase each year. We have seen this illegal use of our public lands increase over the years in new locations, many we never thought could be used for marijuana growing. We continue to work with law enforcement staff and use volunteers to eradicate these gardens when found. We face a daunting task, but we are up to the challenge! It is remarkable what is happening on national forest system lands, but it is also remarkable regarding the great assistance from volunteers who want to take part in cleaning up their public lands for all to enjoy.

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