

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR **BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

## **Operation LOCCUST attacks plague of marijuana plants on public lands**

More than 83,000 marijuana plants were destroyed on BLM lands in Tulare County in late July and early August during an interagency effort to eradicate marijuana on public and private lands.

Fourteen state, local and federal agencies participated in Operation LOCCUST - Locating Organized Cannabis Cultivators Using Saturation Techniques. BLM provided 19 of the 230 team members, said Troy Bolen, special agent in charge in BLM's California state office. Eighteen of the BLM team members are law enforcement officers. Team members came from numerous locations including Ridgecrest; Bakersfield; the California state office; Washington, D.C.; and the Central California district. (text continues below)



A worker removes irrigation tubing that snaked through the area to water marijuana plants

Separate statistics for BLM land haven't been calculated, but Operation Locust as a whole has removed 245 trash bags full of garbage, 1,824 pounds of fertilizer, 22 pounds of pesticides and 14 dump truck loads (14,500 pounds) of marijuana.

"They've removed about 27 miles of irrigation pipe. That's almost enough to reach from the California State Capitol to Auburn," Bolen said.

The marijuana growing areas pose a threat to both the environment and members of the public who might use the area, Bolen pointed out. Vegetation is cleared from the growing areas and growers kill wildlife. Growers leave piles of trash and chemicals can contaminate soil and water. Thirty-six arrests have been made and 27 weapons seized, so someone using the public lands might face an armed marijuana grower.



Trash littered the area of the encampment





Crews prepare to board a helicopter to get close to the sites



- D. Christy, 8/08

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