Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Department of the Interior has scored notable successes this summer in its war on drugs. Interior Secretary Don Hodel emphasized that drug enforcement is a top priority in his Department.

The summer-long effort to eliminate illegal drug activity on the Nation's public lands has led to the destruction of more than 166,000 marijuana plants on Interior lands. Almost 400,000 additional plants were eradicated in immediately adjacent areas in cooperative enforcement actions with state, local and other federal agencies.

"The President and Mrs. Reagan have ed the Nation's war on drugs," Hodel said. "Like most Americans, I wholeheartedly support this cause and am delighted by the Interior Department's contribution to the anti-drug campaign."

The number of sites and arrests for marijuana cultivation exceeds all previous yearly counts since statistics began being kept in 1982. Plants on more than 430 sites were eradicated in national parks, wildlife refuges, Indian reservations, and other tribal and public lands. A total of 93 individuals associated with marijuana growing were arrested, and another 650 were arrested for illegal drug trafficking, use or possession.

Enforcement officials are not certain whether Interior1s statistics, which are up significantly from last year's figures when 110,000 marijuana plants were seized, mean that drug activity actually is increasing on federal lands or whether it merely reflects the Department's intensified enforcement efforts uncovering existing illegal activities.

"This summer’s results indicate that marijuana growers have modified their tactics for the current growing season, possibly as a reaction to increased enforcement activities in recent years," Hodel said. "Interior agents are finding fewer large open fields, but many smaller, well concealed plots consisting of a few dozen to several hundred plants."

"Visitors to parks deserve credit for increased detection of marijuana growing since they were directly responsible for several of these cases, including the largest one," Hodel said. In June, Hodel called on the 500 million visitors who visit Interior lands each year to report suspicious activity. In August, a visitor to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park reported suspected marijuana fields in an area he thought was in the park. The area, actually just outside park boundaries, was searched and 20,000 marijuana plants were destroyed.

"Many of the sites are equipped with sophisticated irrigation systems, some with portable pumps and hundreds of yards of hose where a constant supply of water can be fed to parched soil," Hode1 said. Earlier this year, 1500 feet of PVC tubing was seized from a marijuana site in Yosemite National Park. The pipe was diverting water from a makeshift dam constructed on a stream with hoses running to five separate plots.

To avoid detection from the air (marijuana plants have a characteristic green color) growers often hide

plants under tree canopy, in heavy brush and in corn rows with every second or third stalk replaced by a marijuana plant. Some "gardens" are equipped with camouflage netting attached to wires which can be immediately raised should helicopters approach. Military ground sensors, the type used in Vietnam to warn of troop movement, have been discovered at some sites. Interior law enforcement officers also report an increase in the number of booby traps they have encountered this year.

"We may be seeing the return of satellite marijuana gardens because we have found so many small time operations," said Jim Donovan, Chief of Law Enforcement for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). "There also seems to be a change from drying and processing at the growing site to cooperative processing areas in large barns away from the growing area."

Both Bureau of Land Management and BIA enforcement agents report that marijuana growers are planting later this year than in the past and that the drought seems to be stunting their crop.

Interior has employed modern, sophisticated technology to combat the marijuana growers' tactics. This summer a satellite orbiting 320 miles above the earth was used for drug enforcement activities on Interior lands for the first time". BLM geologists and law enforcement agents developed a technique using the satellite, LANDSAT IV that enables them to concentrate enforcement resources in high potential areas.

This year the Bureau of Indian Affairs expanded its Marijuana Eradication and Reconnaissance Center in Eugene, Oregon. The center specializes in providing basic and advanced courses in marijuana eradication. More than 150 officers from BIA, tribal governments and state, county and other federal agencies were trained in the spring, double the number last year.

U.S. Park Police also have increased their drug enforcement activity in urban parks and monuments in San Francisco, New York, and Washington D.C. with 524 people arrested since mid-June for trafficking, use or possession of illegal drugs. Park police have noticed an increase in use and trafficking in PCP and LSD, both hallucinogens, and in crack-cocaine, and increasing contacts with armed drug dealers. "Since public lands comprise a significant portion of our coastlines and borders use of these areas as transshipment points for drug smuggling continues to be a problem" Hodel said. "Interior enforcement agents in cooperation with the Drug Enforcement Agency and U.S. Customs Service have uncovered a number of huge shipments of cocaine heroin and marijuana

'"We will not tolerate any level of illegal drug activity on our public lands. These areas are for the enjoyment of the American people and we are determined to keep them drug free." Below is a list of States where marijuana eradication activities have occurred on Interior lands this summer:

Alaska	Public Lands
Arizona	Public Lands
Arkansas	Buffalo National River Park
California	Public Lands Hoopa Indian Reservation Pauma Indian Reservation Whiskey town National Recreation Area
Colorado	Public Lands
Delaware	Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge
Georgia	Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park
Hawaii	Hawaii Volcanoes National Park

Idaho	Public Lands
Illinois	Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge
Kentucky	Mammoth Cave National Park
Massachusetts	Minute Man National Historical Park Cape Cod National Seashore
Montana	Flathead Indian Reservation
Nevada	Public Lands
New Mexico	Public Lands Isleta Pueblo Indian Reservation
North Carolina	Cherokee Indian Reservation
Ohio	Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area
Oklahoma	Osage Indian Reservation
Oregon	Public Lands
Pennsylvania	Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
South Dakota	Crow Creek Indian Reservation Lower Brule Indian Reservation Rosebud Indian Reservation
Tennessee	Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Utah	Public Lands Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge
Virginia	Cumberland Gap National Historical Park
Washington	Spokane Indian Reservation Coleville Indian Reservation Coulee Dam National Recreation Area Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Mt. Rainier National Park
West Virginia	New River Gorge National River

Note: In most instances, several marijuana cultivation sites were eradicated on each of the Federal land areas identified above. The term "public lands" refers to areas managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

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