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## Bridge over puddled waters

More than one Eugene resident was caught trying to bridge the gap between islands Thursday when two-and-a-half inches of rain fell on University students attending their first classes of the term. More slippin', slidin' and plain old getting Oregon wet can be expected today and Saturday according to weather forecasts predicting — what else? — more rain.

Photo by Steven Scher

### Will coastal bust curtail Eugene market?

## Thai-ing one over on big-time dealers

By KEVIN HARDEN  
Of the Emerald

Eugene marijuana users may or may not be crying over the loss of nearly eight tons of high-grade "Thai stick" in what may be the largest drug bust on the West Coast last week. No one knows for certain how the confiscation of the drug will affect the local marijuana market, at least not yet.

The marijuana, valued at almost \$20 million, was seized last weekend in a massive drug bust that involved federal and Coos County law enforcement officials. According to Michael Wright, head of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration office in Eugene, the arrests of 17 East Coast and California residents culminated nearly a year's investigation of a drug smuggling operation located in Coos County near Bandon.

The arrests were made Dec. 31 by law enforcement officials who observed the smugglers' transfer of marijuana in bales from a 100-foot pleasure boat off the Oregon coast to a waiting truck by amphibious vehicles, on the beach south of Bandon.

After the arrests the marijuana was transferred under close guard to Eugene, where it was incinerated Wednesday by local law enforcement officers and the Eugene Water and Electric Board.

If the destruction of nearly eight tons of high-grade marijuana brought tears to local eyes, it has yet to be noticed. Jerry Beck, of the University's Drug Information Center (DIC), explains because of limited information gathered about the arrests and the smuggling operation, it would be difficult to say what effect the loss of the drug will have on the local marijuana market.

"There is quite a bit of Thai stick around Eugene, but because we don't know about their (the smugglers) distribution plans, it would be impossible to say whether it would have eventually ended up here," Beck says.

It would seem likely that some of the drug would have ended up in the Eugene market, Beck explained, but because the smugglers were stopped before they

could distribute the Thai stick, it isn't known how much was intended for the West Coast and how much would have been shipped to the East.

So far law enforcement agents haven't found a link between the Oregon arrests and a similar bust a week ago off the Florida coast. In that arrest, nearly 110 tons of marijuana were confiscated.

Pressure on East Coast smuggling operations may have forced smugglers to move to Oregon, Beck says, primarily because Thai stick, which is grown in Thailand and shipped across the Pacific Ocean, would be difficult to smuggle to the East Coast. Most of the East Coast marijuana comes from Colombia, he says, which is easier to ship through East Coast ports.

"The Oregon Coast is being used as a major smuggling point for the West, there's no doubt about that," Mark Miller, also from the DIC, explains.

Had the smugglers been able to distribute their loot, Miller speculated, most of the marijuana probably would have ended up in Seattle, Portland, San Francisco and other major cities on the coast. Very little might have found its way into the Eugene-Springfield marijuana market, he said.

"Some people have held the opinion that while it (Thai stick) is good marijuana, it is somewhat over-priced for what it is. There are other drugs that people will buy over the Thai stick that cost about the same," Miller says.

"It's appreciated, but it's not the best," he added.

"How it was to be distributed is the big question right now," Beck says. "But eight tons is enough pot for quite a few cities, that's for sure."

## EWEB uses 'high' quality fuel; eight tons of pot go up in smoke

The Eugene Water and Electric Board used some "high" quality fuel to power its boilers Wednesday night.

Even though the marijuana went up in smoke, it is unlikely anyone even caught a whiff of it, according to Vern Adkison, director of the Lane Regional Air Pollution Authority.

Adkison says the heat produced in the furnace was so extreme that the chemically-active agents in the drug were destroyed before they went up the smoke-stack.

The unorthodox fuel, however, did not produce any electricity. According to an EWEB plant operator, the utility's boilers were not used to power the turbines but,

instead, were used to produce steam heat.

EWEB steam is used to heat the Agripac cannery, city buildings, Sacred Heart Hospital and Chase Gardens. None of the pot-powered steam found its way onto campus. The University's physical plant produces the steam heat for the campus.

If the pot fuel had been used to produce electricity, Tom Santee, EWEB spokesman, says the cost per kilowatt hour would have figured out to \$20,000. By comparison, Santee says a normal kilowatt hour costs one cent.

Michael Wright, chief of the Drug Enforcement Agency's Eugene office, says the marijuana

was stored in the National Guard Armory on Centennial Boulevard before being transported to the EWEB plant.

Extra security measures were taken to guard the marijuana while it was in storage and while it was being burned. Eugene police officers were stationed at the EWEB plant and plainclothes police threw the marijuana bundles into the furnace.

Not all the marijuana seized in the off-shore raid was burned. Charles Turner, assistant U.S. attorney says several hundred pounds were saved for evidence in the trial of the 17 men arrested near Bandon. The trial will be held in Portland.