

Marijuana haul reaching past 31,000 plants while lawmen continue efforts

Approximately 10,250 growing marijuana plants were yanked from U.S. Forest Service land northwest of Cave Junction by a law enforcement team effort focused on illegal weed being grown by a cartel.

The effort brings to more than 31,000 the total number of marijuana plants lawmen uprooted in Josephine and Jackson counties during the past few weeks.

The most recent operation involved plants pulled from the Chrome Ridge area on Friday, Aug. 24, said Josephine Marijuana Eradication Team (JOMET). The eight-member team participated in a Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) case with Jackson County Sheriff's Office, and the forest service.

Jackson County provided some 25 deputies, said Det. Sgt. Ken Selig, of Josephine Interagency Narcotics Team. He added that Jackson County also aided DEA with logistical supplies including a helicopter, and a dump truck used to haul the marijuana plants to a dump site for destruction.

Several cartel grows in Josephine and Jackson counties have been investigated since early spring by DEA and the forest service, said Selig. Large grows were revealed, he said, by

tips from many sources and flights over federal land.

He added that sites typically are manned by two to five Hispanic men. The majority of growers, in this country illegally, are recruited by families from Mexico to grow marijuana on Oregon's federally managed land, Selig said.

During recent weeks, JOMET assisted DEA with eradication of slightly less than 10,000 pot plants near Carberry Creek in Jackson County, and approximately 9,000 plants off Coyote Creek in Josephine County.

Additionally, DEA and Jackson County authorities eradicated 2,000 plants off Abbot Creek near Prospect.

JOINT and Josephine County Sheriff's Office, said Selig, urge caution for those visiting the forest. They should be extra vigilant, he said.

"The growers of these large marijuana grow sites are armed, rarely speak English, have been instructed to use deadly force to defend the grow sites," said Selig. "Many are located along popular trails and water resource areas.

"If you see suspicious activity or come upon a marijuana growing site, leave the area and notify law enforcement," Selig said.



RIVERSIDE PHYSICAL THERAPY in Western Plaza in Cave Junction took delivery of a large tub for use in low-impact exercise and physical therapy. Installation of the pool, which is 8-feet wide and 16-feet long, required that a double door and window be temporarily

removed. The 2,000-gallon pool replaces a smaller Jacuzzi unit and allows for water therapy programs for hip, knee, and lower-back patients which used to take place at the Cave Junction Swimming Pool. (Photo by Michelle Binker, *Illinois Valley News*)

Fire danger level raised to ‘extreme’ by ODF order

The public use fire danger level on land protected by the Oregon Dept. of Forestry's (ODF) S.W. Oregon District climbed to "extreme" (red) at 12:01 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 28.

The Industrial Fire Precaution Level (IFPL) remains at Level II.

Fire precaution levels assigned by the S.W. Oregon District, located in Medford, affect state, private, county and Bureau of

Land Management forestland in Josephine and Jackson counties. The district has unit offices in Medford and Grants Pass.

The following public use restriction changes are in effect:

*Chain saw use is disallowed between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. During other hours, users must have an ax, shovel and fire extinguisher on-site, and provide a one-hour fire watch after using a chain saw.

*Mowing dry grass is disallowed between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. (except for agricultural purposes, such as cutting hay).

*Cutting, grinding or welding metal is disallowed between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. During other hours, a water supply must be present at the work site, and work may proceed only in a cleared area.

The following public use restrictions remain in effect:

*All open burning of

debris is prohibited. This includes burn barrels.

*Fireworks are prohibited, except in cleared areas such as green lawns and driveways.

*Camp fires are allowed only in designated campgrounds. This restriction includes charcoal-fired barbecues; however, stoves using liquefied or bottled

fuels are allowed.

*Vehicles, including motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles, are not allowed on unimproved roads.

*Smoking is allowed only in vehicles and only while on improved roads.

For more information about ODF fire season regulations, phone 474-3152 or 664-3328.



WINDRIDGE VINEYARDS provided the setting for the annual membership meeting of the Illinois River Valley Arts Council (IRVAC), Wednesday evening Aug. 22. The arts group has determined that it will host its Woolly Winter Gala again. A likely location is Siskiyou Field Institute's Deer Creek Center in Selma in February. (Photo by *Illinois Valley News*)



RICK'S COPY EXPRESS held an open house at its new location on 200 W. Lister St. across from the Cave Junction Post Office on Wednesday, Aug. 22. Visitors enjoyed refreshments and a look at the new office supply and copy store. It's also an authorized FedEx shipping center. (*I.V. News* photo)

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