



Humboldt County Sheriff's Office

826 Fourth Street, Eureka, CA 95501

Date: 08-22-2014

From: Lt. Steve Knight
(707) 268-3630

Subject: Large Marijuana Grows with Environmental Damage

Case: 201403929
201403949

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

On 08-21-2014, at approximately 9:00 a.m., the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office, with the assistance of the Humboldt County Drug Task Force, Cal-Fire Law Enforcement and a California Fish and Wildlife Biologist and Game Warden served Humboldt County Superior Court search warrants in the 40000 block of Mattole Road, Honeydew, California.

When the deputies arrived at the first search warrant location they located 24 greenhouses on an approximate one acre flat area containing 4,935 growing marijuana plants that ranged in size from 6" to 4' tall, along with a barn and a residence. In the barn deputies located a dormant indoor marijuana growing operation and approximately one pound of marijuana bud. In the residence the deputies located a cash counter and packaging materials for marijuana.

They located five men on the property when they arrived to serve the search warrant. Four were determined to have arrived in the last five days and the fifth was identified as Jason Dewayne Fleming, 42 years old, from Sebastopol, California. The deputies learned from the four men they had been hired by Fleming to work on the marijuana grow for \$20.00 per hour.

Deputies searched a truck on the property that belonged to Fleming and located approximately \$23,000.00 in cash.

Deputies, Cal-Fire Law Enforcement and California Fish and Wildlife Biologist and Game Warden also witness significant environmental damage to the property, including Douglas Fir Trees and Tan Oak up to two feet in diameter being harvested. Fleming was interviewed and told the Cal-Fire Officer he did not possess any permits for timberland conversion or water drafting from the nearby creek. The Cal-Fire Officer, Deputies and Fish and Wildlife Biologist saw where Fleming had illegally constructed roads that were in poor condition and had placed a pump in a stream to draft water for the marijuana plants. The water pump was in Sanders Creek, which is known to harbor state and federally listed Salmon and Steelhead. The four workers told the deputies the pump runs twenty four hours a day to water the marijuana plants and the stream was dry below the pump. There was a fine dust powder of over 6" deep on the road led to the pump, which will wash into the fish bearing creeks and water courses that Salmon and Steelhead utilize when winter rains arrive.

Deputies arrested Fleming for cultivation and possession for sale of marijuana, California Fish and Wildlife Code Violations for altering a streambed, public resource code violations of illegal timber harvesting, misuse of timberlands and conducting a timber operation without a permit. He was transported to the Humboldt County Correctional Facility and booked; his bail was set at \$25,000.00. The other four men were identified and released at the scene. Charges could be filed against them at a later date.

The deputies, Humboldt County Drug Task Force Agents and California Fish and Wildlife Game Warden and Biologist then drove to a second search warrant location in the 42000 block of Mattole Road, Honeydew. At that location two suspects fled the scene on foot into the woods when officers approached; two adults remained at the scene and were detained.

Deputies searched the property and residence. They located an outdoor marijuana grow with 556 growing marijuana plants. The plants were 3' to 9' tall and weighed from 25 to 35 pounds. Deputies estimated the plants could easily yield one pound to three pounds of marijuana bud each. Deputies located a AK-47 assault weapon, two semi-automatic handguns and a pistol in the residence. The two suspects who were detained told the deputies they owned a hotel in Hawaii, and property in San Diego where they also live. They told the deputies they thought it was legal to grow 99 marijuana plants each.

When deputies, the California Fish and Wildlife Biologist and Game Warden located the water source for the marijuana, they saw it was two water pumps in Wood Creek. The pumps were drafting water into one inch water lines. Wood Creek is known as an important Salmon and Steelhead stream and critical cold water source for the Mattole River. The biologist told deputies this was adversely affecting the Mattole and the creek, which are currently at a low flow due to severe drought conditions.

The biologist, deputies and game Warden also located a large trash pile. The trash pile was right next to wood creek and contained discarded hazardous materials, including discarded oil containers, batteries, chemicals and household garbage.

The two detained suspects were identified and released. The two suspects that fled the scene were also identified. Deputies and California Fish and Wildlife will be seeking criminal charges of cultivation and possession for sale of marijuana, armed in the commission of a felony, possession of an assault weapon, California Fish and Wildlife Code Violations for water diversion and alteration, (6 counts), water pollution, (8 counts), trash near a waterway(2 counts).

Besides criminal penalties, each count of water diversion and alteration carries civil penalty of \$10,000.00 per violation, each count of water pollution carries a civil penalty \$40,000.00 per violation, and each count of trash near a waterway carries a civil penalty of \$40,000.00 per violation.

The case is also being forwarded to Humboldt County Environmental Health for possible additional criminal and civil charges.

[Click here for photos](#)

Anyone with information for the Sheriff's Office regarding this case or related criminal activity is encouraged to call the Sheriff's Office at 707-445-7251 or the Sheriff's Office Crime Tip line at 707-268-2539.

Mike Downey
Sheriff

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