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U.S. Department of the Interior

Santa Monica Mountains  
National Recreation Area

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## SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

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### Multi-Agency Effort Successfully Eradicates Marijuana Plants in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

On Tuesday, National Park Service Rangers from Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, California State Park Police, CAMP (Campaign Against Marijuana Planting), and Mountains Recreation Conservation Authority (MRCA) entered three marijuana plantation sites, two located in Malibu Creek State Park and one located in the Zuma-Trancas Canyon area on National Park Service land. All three plantation sites were initially discovered by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, who led the operation. In all, 3509 plants were eradicated, including 1421 plants at Zuma Canyon. Garbage, PVC piping, camping equipment, fertilizer, and chemicals were also removed.

Collaboration between the many local, state, and federal law enforcement and land management agencies represents a significant achievement in addressing illegal marijuana cultivation activity on public lands that poses a potential threat to visitor safety and natural resources.

"This was an extremely successful collaborative effort," said Chief Park Ranger Evan Jones. "Not only were we able to pool our resources to eradicate the marijuana plants, but we were also able to take initial steps towards site clean-up and natural resource restoration."

One of the discovered sites at Zuma Canyon is located in a wildlife corridor, inhabited by a number of animals including bobcats and mountain lions. In addition to wildlife disturbance and displacement, marijuana plantations are often sites of soil disturbance, PVC irrigation pipe installations, natural vegetation removal, large amounts of pesticides and insecticides, fertilizers, and trash and septic pits. These sites often have make-shift illegal campfires that pose a special risk in the greater Santa Monica Mountains area for widespread fire. The estimated cost to clean up one cultivated acre is between \$10,000-\$12,000, diverting funds away from public programs and scientific research.

In 2007, approximately 3,900 marijuana plants were found on National Park Service land within the Santa Monica Mountains at Trancas Canyon, with an estimated street value of \$10 million and covering 1.5 acres. The largest marijuana cultivation seizure in the greater Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area occurred at Malibu Creek State Park in 2005, led by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, and totaled approximately 28,000 plant seizures. Throughout California, 3,641,328 marijuana plants were seized on state and federal public lands in 2008.

"The National Park Service thanks all of the agencies involved in this multi-jurisdictional effort, as well as support from state and federal legislators for providing ongoing critical funding for marijuana eradication operations," said Woody Smeck, Park Superintendent. "We are especially grateful for the support Senator Diane Feinstein has provided to address these illegal activities and protect public safety."

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