

# Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks News Release



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Sequoia and Kings  
Canyon National Parks

47050 Generals Highway  
Three Rivers, CA 93271

559 565-3341 phone  
559 565-3730 fax

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Contact: Alexandra Picavet 1-559-565-3131

## Earth Day Cleanup of a Different Kind

**The earliest raid and removal of an illegal marijuana grow operation in Sequoia National Park**

Sequoia National Park— On April 22, Earth Day, National Park Rangers with the aid of NPS Special Investigators, agents with the Office of Homeland Security, Tulare County Sheriff's Office, and California Highway Patrol located and removed a new marijuana grow site in Sequoia National Park. Rangers removed 7,922 plants, many not yet in the ground, and destroyed the infrastructure and camping area to keep the growers from coming back to the area.

As part of the NPS commitment to ridding Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks of illegal drug operations, NPS law enforcement rangers raided this illegal grow site in an attempt to capture any suspects. Two suspects fled and eluded capture by running down a steep embankment. Rangers tracked and pursued the suspects while the Tulare Sheriff's Deputies conducted road surveillance and officers from the California Highway Patrol searched using a fixed-wing plane but were unable to apprehend the suspects.

Investigators worked with the U.S. Attorney's office to obtain a search warrant for the tent found on site. Evidence collected has been submitted to the Drug Enforcement Agency lab in San Francisco to be analyzed and may lead to future arrests.

The growing of illegal marijuana on public lands is a major threat to national treasures like Sequoia National Park every year. Since the year 2000 more than 157,000 plants have been removed by law enforcement rangers. In addition, in the past three and one-half years rangers and natural resource staff have found and removed: 18,465 pounds of garbage and hazardous waste — including 445 small propane canisters, empty and partially empty packaging from 9.5 gallons of liquid insecticides and 12,900 pounds fertilizer, and 22.7 miles of irrigation hose. All of this was collected from 105 grow sites and camps illegally cut into the wilderness of Sequoia National Park. The long-term damage that this illegal activity has done on once pristine wilderness is not easy to evaluate at this time, but it is evident in the alterations to the land and the volume of poisons and fertilizers that have been used by the growers in connection with these activities.

A more extensive cleanup of this most recent site is planned for later this year. The investigation continues.

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