BUTTE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
MEDIA RELEASE

JERRY W. SMITH
SHERIFF-CORONER

DATE : **October 14, 2011**

RELEASED BY : **Sergeant Marty Rolph**

CONTACT # : **530-538-7389**

On October 14, 2011 the Butte County Sheriff's Office Special Enforcement Unit assisted by Butte County Inter-Agency Narcotics Taskforce, Plumas County Sheriff's Office, Yuba County Sheriff's Office and agents from Fish and Game, Immigration, Butte County Probation, and the Drug Enforcement Administration served four search warrants in the 13000 block of Helltown Road, in Butte Creek Canyon.

During the service of the search warrants Deputies and Agents contacted several people on the property that were working as marijuana trimmers. One of the individual's contacted was Gerardo Lopez Espinoza, 53, of Soledad CA. Espinoza was interviewed and ultimately arrested for possession of Cocaine and armed in the commission of a felony. Espinoza was later booked into the Butte County Jail on two felony charges. The other workers contacted on the property were released at the scene.

Deputies continued their investigation and determined the marijuana growing complex, which consisted of ten different growing sites over four parcels and two large drying and processing areas, was being operated by a marijuana storefront in the Bay Area. The people responsible for the marijuana grow sites attempted to hide their illegitimacy by posting Proposition 215 medical marijuana recommendations at each grow site. Deputies were able to show that the marijuana gardens were not as they appeared but actually a commercial operation hiding under the disguise of Proposition 215 for the purpose of sales.

During the search of the four parcels, Deputies located numerous Home Depot cardboard boxes identical to the ones found during a traffic stop on October 12th, 2011 where 1,966 pounds of

dried marijuana was confiscated. Deputies found and eradicated 451 growing marijuana plants, and confiscated 2,120 pounds of dried processed marijuana.