

BUTTE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE MEDIA RELEASE

**PERRY L. RENIFF
SHERIFF-CORONER**



DATE : 7/16/09
RELEASED BY : Sgt. Steve Collins
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Today the Butte County Sheriff's Marijuana Unit conducted raids on two illegal marijuana gardens in the Forest Ranch area. The Marijuana Unit was assisted by agents from the Butte Interagency Narcotics Task Force and sheriff's deputies. The two gardens were located by aerial reconnaissance flights earlier this year. The first marijuana garden was located in a remote area near Big Chico Creek above Garland Road. When officers entered the marijuana garden area they approached the kitchen area and an unknown number of suspects fled down the hill. Officers attempted to track the suspects but after about an hour the search was terminated. Two tents were found in this marijuana garden operation along with a processing area for processing the marijuana. No firearms were found in this marijuana garden. Officers eradicated 6,041 marijuana plants from this garden. The marijuana plants were nearly ready for harvest and contained a large amount of "Bud" on the plants. Had these plants been harvested they could have yielded an estimated \$24,164,000.00 at the street level.

The second marijuana garden was located in a remote area off of Cabernet Way near Little Chico Creek. Upon entering the garden area and clearing it officers didn't find any suspects or tents. There was a makeshift kitchen area and areas had been cleared out possibly for tents at one time based on how they appeared. Officers found that a number of the plants had already had their tops cut off or had been harvested. Other marijuana plants appeared ready for harvest and had been recently watered. Officers eradicated 2,577 marijuana plants from this site. The estimated street value of that many plants is about \$10,308,000.00. No weapons were found in the marijuana garden.

Both of these marijuana gardens were being watered from gravity feed watering systems that were siphoning water from nearby creeks. The natural vegetation had been cut out these areas and has made them prone to erosion. They also had littered trash throughout the areas, which will impact the wildlife. Both of these gardens covered about 3-4 acres of land.

Based on current trends it appears the size and number of marijuana gardens are increasing in Butte County. The Marijuana Unit is actively investigating a number of other marijuana gardens as well as receiving numerous tips from citizens.

If anyone has information on suspicious activity or persons related to marijuana they are encouraged to contact the Butte County Sheriff's Marijuana Unit at 538-7389. Citizens can remain anonymous.