

Fiscal Year

2018

Annual Strategic Plan

State/Local Agency Name: California, Mendocino County Sheriff's Office. (County of Mendocino Marijuana Eradication)

I. Domestic Cannabis Intelligence Overview:

A. Self Assessment - Summary of the previous year's activities and if the agency met last year's Annual Strategic Plan goals (include general statistical and expense results). Explain any reasons for a significant rise or drop of eradication statistics from the previous season.

Between January 1, 2017 and August 1, 2017 COMMET seized 89,940 total marijuana plants from 74 separate sites. All marijuana gardens eradicated during 2017 were either located outdoors or inside of greenhouses which utilized light deprivation tactics for the purpose of harvesting marijuana in the Spring to allow for a second grow/harvest in the Fall. The 2017 statistics include 18 arrests, 8 seized firearms, approximately \$25,093.00 seized US Currency and 2 seized vehicles. COMMET also seized 2,003 pounds of processed marijuana and 19.3 pounds of concentrated cannabis. In 2017 COMMET received seven assists from California Attorney General's Office CAMP Program (Campaign Against Marijuana Planting), in 2016 we received 4 days, and in 2015 we received 11 days of assistance.

Eradication efforts have been somewhat hampered in 2017 by low staffing levels within the Sheriff's Office and COMMET. The COMMET Division is staffed with one Sheriff's Sergeant, one Deputy Sheriff, and one part time reserve Deputy Sheriff during the summer months of 2017. The Unit continues to rely on assistance from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Mendocino Major Crimes Task Force, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), CAMP, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and the Sheriff's Office Detective Unit. The support from these other investigative agencies and units are limited, at times, based upon their caseloads. In 2017 COMMET received funding from the Domestic Cannabis Eradication Suppression Program (DCESP) in the amount of \$70,000.00. This funding was spent, completely, in performance of the program goals outlined in the submitted proposal.

In 2017 COMMET received 5 days of reconnaissance overflight assistance from the California National Guard. The limited overflight assistance from the National Guard and the absence of the traditional DEA Marijuana Identification Overflight School significantly hampered COMMET's ability to identify, locate and eradicate outdoor marijuana gardens in Mendocino County in 2017. With the smaller amount of DCESP funding, compared to some prior years, COMMET experienced a decrease in aerial support for intelligence and eradication operations in 2017.

In 2017 COMMET saw a slight decrease in trespass marijuana grows on both public (BLM, USFS, State) and private rural lands. This may in part be due to the lack of aerial observation hours as well as a trend of marijuana legalization and the growing operations moving from the more rural to a more suburban setting. The trespass growers are continuing to grow a variety of marijuana which matures earlier and COMMET has seen marijuana gardens harvested in June rather than the fall as in years past. In 2017 there was also a continued trend of outdoor marijuana growing operations being established on private lands. Investigations continue to show large organized trafficking organizations or groups, renting or leasing privately owned property in Mendocino County. Often times the same organization or group would rent or lease multiple properties and would grow a couple hundred large outdoor marijuana plants per parcel as opposed to a single thousand plant grow. This strategy hampered eradication efforts as the marijuana grows were spread out over multiple locations and harder to connect to a single organization or group.

Due to the fact that many marijuana gardens are moving from public to private lands, many involving curtilage issues, requires the completion and service of search warrants to legally eradicate the gardens. This increases the time needed for intelligence gathering, obtaining the search warrant, organizing the operation, executing the search warrant, writing the crime report and logging of seized evidence.

B. Current Projections - Degree of problem in your Area of Responsibility (AOR), general geographical locations of major cultivation (regions/counties/towns/sub-divisions/parks), identity/association of violators (individuals and organizations), and level of sophistication (e.g., booby-traps/alarms, etc.)

Located approximately one hundred and twenty miles north of San Francisco, Mendocino County lies in the heart of the redwood empire. It is surrounded by Sonoma County to the south with Lake County to the east. Humboldt County is to the north, Trinity County to the northeast, Tehama and Glen County boarder on the east. With approximately thirty-five hundred square miles Mendocino County is one of the largest counties in the state. The property is a mix of rural areas including large tracts of corporate timberlands. The Mendocino National Forest and the Jackson State Forest make up a large portion of public land along with the Bureau of Land Management properties.

The majority of the population of the county is surrounding the incorporated cities of Ukiah, Willits and Fort Bragg. There are several smaller towns consisting of Mendocino, Gualala, Elk, Anchor Bay, Albion, Caspar, and West Port as well as the small incorporated city of Point Arena on the coast. Inland is home to the unincorporated towns of Hopland, Redwood Valley, Calpella, Potter Valley, Boonville, Covelo, Leggett, Piercy and Laytonville. The overall population of the county is approximately 87,840 people. Agriculture and tourism are the two primary sources of income to the county.

The Rural nature of Mendocino County, along with the large tracts of corporate forest lands and remote public lands, along with ideal soil conditions and a long history of acceptance of marijuana cultivation by a large percentage of the population, makes this county prime for marijuana cultivation. The public access to the different types of land holdings makes it very easy for cultivators to infiltrate these areas and plant marijuana in large tracts. Since the 1980s when the DEA and the California Department of Justice along with the local law enforcement started addressing the marijuana cultivation problem, Mendocino County has seen an increase in the amount of plants grown both indoor and outdoor while the overall law enforcement budget has decreased. Pressure from the program in past years has forced more of the original marijuana cultivators to build elaborate indoor growing operations.

The confusion of medical marijuana laws, the trend for the state of California to move towards legalization and the misinformation through the media make Mendocino County a haven for people who are trying to join "the new gold rush", where they envision getting rich on the illegal marijuana industry. Over the past years the county has gained a reputation that marijuana cultivation is overlooked and people from all over the United States are moving to the county to take advantage of the situation. The sheer numbers of marijuana gardens being grown in the County, coupled with the varying degrees of legality under current California law, places a strain on the ability to enforce marijuana laws due to the amount of investigation work needed to be conducted and the high caseloads of both the Sheriff's Office and the District Attorney's Office.

With the changes in the law, priority investigations have now been identified as obvious commercial marijuana cultivators outside the local permitting process, major marijuana traffickers, trespass marijuana cultivators on both public and private property, as well as those involved in water diversions and serious environmental damage cases.

Along with large case loads and reduced personnel, large marijuana cultivation sites growing in the remote corporate and public lands are being run by Crime Families from outside the County. These families recruit migrant workers who are often undocumented and are placed in the cultivation sites for the outdoor marijuana season. These workers are provided with firearms and are advised to protect the cultivation sites or risk being murdered by the subjects who hired them. This creates a danger to the public attempting to use these lands for legitimate business or recreation. The program lessens the burden on law enforcement by providing funds for the continued investigation and eradication of marijuana by a specialized unit.

In 2017 the marijuana gardens located on public lands and on remote private corporate lands have fewer plants than in the past, but the typical garden still contains at least a few hundred plants. There is also a trend to spread out more gardens with smaller plant counts in an effort to better conceal the grow sites. The physical makeup of the gardens remains the same and causes the same environmental damages to the land. Marijuana cultivation continues to be the largest single criminal activity in Mendocino County. Marijuana cultivation is occurring in all areas within Mendocino County. There appears to be two distinct type of marijuana cultivators in Mendocino County; the first being large scale trespass growers who usually grow thousands of marijuana plants in remote areas on private corporate timber property or public forest property (USFS or BLM), second being individuals who openly grow marijuana plants on private property under the guise of growing it for medical purposes, legally permitted grows, or personal use grows. The second type of grower usually grows less than 200 marijuana plants but due to the size of the marijuana plants, sometimes harvesting thousands of pounds of marijuana from the largest of these smaller gardens. These growers often have numerous parcels of lands with smaller gardens, making it difficult to connect all gardens to the grower during an investigation.

There appears to be a slight increase of grows within the National Forest. Violence from marijuana encounters (robberies, protection of gardens, etc.) continues to impact law enforcement officers throughout the year.

Homicides related to marijuana cultivation or sales thus far in 2017 are down. There has been two significant armed robberies, involving firearms reported and several unreported armed robberies related to marijuana production.

In 2017 the seizure of marijuana plants compared to 2016 is down but the the growing season has several months to go. This is due mainly to low staffing numbers within the Sheriff's Office and the recent changes in the law legalizing a significant amount of what used to be illegal in terms of cultivation, possession, use or transportation of marijuana.

Sharing of personnel between Sheriff's Office Units as well as allied agencies within the County is costly in terms of overtime and coverage in those divisions but it is necessary due to the limited number of personnel assigned to the COMMET Unit.

C. Percentage of Enforcement Spent On:

Public Lands vs. Private Lands

Outdoor Cultivation vs. Indoor Grows

Public Lands	5%	Private Lands	95%
Indoor Grows	0%	Outdoor Cultivation	100%

II. State / Local Eradication Suppression Program:

A. Agency Point of Contact (POC):

Name:

Bruce Smith

Title:	Sheriff's Sergeant/COMMET Operations Supervisor
Telephone No:	707-463-4556
Email Address:	smithb@mendocinocounty.org
Address Line 1:	951 Low Gap Road
Address Line 2:	
City:	Ukiah
State:	CA
Zip Code:	95482

1. Resources available from your agency: aircraft, manpower, funding, etc.

4x4 vehicles, dump truck, industrial chipper, all terrain vehicles, 2 full time personnel (Sheriff's Sergeant, Deputy Sheriff), 1 paid reserve Deputy Sheriff (used as needed during raid season), 1 temporarily assigned Deputy Sheriff from the Patrol Division (3-4 month assignment), 6 part time Deputy Sheriffs from the Detective Unit, 5 part time Special Agents from the Mendocino Major Crimes Task Force and various Deputy Sheriff's from the patrol division used during peak raid season.

2. Methods your agency uses for eradication program: air search, informants, public awareness, intelligence, prosecutions, asset removals, etc.

Overflights, informants, intelligence, prosecution, asset removal, public awareness.

B. Who is your agency POC for the DEA Internet Capability Endeavor (DICE):¹

Name:	Jeff Andrade
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Title:	Deputy Sheriff assigned to the COMMET Unit
Telephone No:	707-463-4378
Email Address:	andradej@mendocinocounty.org
Address Line 1:	951 Low Gap Road
Address Line 2:	
City:	Ukiah
State:	CA
Zip Code:	95482

Summarize how your agency will, with its own law enforcement personnel and employees, perform the activities and duties described below:

1. Gather and report intelligence data relating to the illicit cultivation, possession, and distribution of cannabis.
 2. Investigate and report instances involving the trafficking in controlled substances.
 3. Provide law enforcement personnel for the eradication of illicit cannabis located within AOR.
 4. Make arrests and refer to the appropriate prosecutorial authority cases for prosecution under controlled substances laws and other criminal laws.
 5. Send required samples of eradicated cannabis to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) Potency Monitoring Project.
 6. Submit to DEA quarterly expenditure reports.
1. All information developed by COMMET is shared with any agency requesting the intelligence. COMMET will work with WSIN and other information gathering services to keep intelligence current and flowing. Any information developed by COMMET for other agencies is shared as soon as possible.
2. Priority investigations have been identified as obvious commercial marijuana cultivators outside the local permitting process, major marijuana traffickers, trespass marijuana cultivators on both public and private property, as well as those involved in water diversions and serious environmental damage cases. Public safety shall be the determining factor when cases are assigned and investigated as well as the scope and size of the marijuana operation. Requests to assist other agencies will be the second priority providing assistance with both investigation and prosecution of commercial marijuana cultivators and major marijuana traffickers. The program will rely on help from the federal and state agencies of that area available such as DEA and CAMP. The program works with other agencies, local, state and federal with any investigation into the cultivation and trafficking of marijuana. DEA, BLM, USFS and Department of Fish and Wildlife are a large part of the program. In addition to this activity, the program staff assists other agencies as a liaison with the District Attorney's Office. The program is dependent upon information provided by citizens and other agencies. This can be a result of information provided to the program or to other agencies that relay the information to the program.
3. The County of Mendocino Marijuana Eradication Team (COMMET) Unit consists of Sheriff's Sergeant Bruce Smith and Deputy Sheriff Jeff Andrade. From 2012 through

2017 the unit has been assigned a paid Reserve Deputy who assisted during the summer raid season as needed. Sergeant Smith reports to the Lieutenant in charge of the Investigative Service Bureau, who then reports to the Captain of the Field Services Division, who then reports to the Undersheriff who reports to the Sheriff.

Sergeant Smith manages the program by conducting the daily operation including ordering supplies and maintaining the equipment. Both Sergeant Smith and Deputy Andrade conduct investigations into the cultivation and trafficking of marijuana in Mendocino County. They conduct aerial overflights to detect marijuana sites, eradicate marijuana, arrest persons responsible for marijuana related crimes, prepare and serve search warrants, prepare reports to be submitted to the District Attorney for prosecution, coordinate and assists local, state and federal agencies with investigations in the County into marijuana related crimes, conduct training for law enforcement, public and private agencies in the identification and safety issues relating to marijuana investigations. During peak raid times other personnel can be pulled from other divisions within the Sheriff's Office and from other County Law Enforcement agencies to support the COMMET Unit.

Deputy Andrade is responsible for maintaining files and is responsible for maintaining evidence storage and evidence taken as a result of the program activities. He also assists with the training of officers from other agencies and with the coordination of agencies involved in cases within the county.

The paid Reserve Deputy Sheriff assists with the eradication of marijuana, the processing of evidence, maintenance of equipment and other duties as needed during the summer raid season.

4. The COMMET Unit will conduct arrests on subjects located in marijuana cultivation sites and/or those identified as suspects through investigations and submit the investigations to the District Attorney's Office. Suspects who are identified but not arrested will have their cases forwarded to the District Attorney Office, who will determine if there is sufficient evidence to file charges on the suspects. The District Attorney will provide information and advice to the LE component of new case law or other prosecution information when needed. The unit will work with the United States Attorney's Office to coordinate federal prosecution when warranted. The COMMET Unit Sergeant will act as a liaison with other agencies.

5. The COMMET Unit Deputy Sheriff assigned will be responsible for the submission of the requested samples. Following the NIDA guidelines the Deputy will submit samples from representative types of cultivation encountered during the program investigations. These samples will include outdoor samples from both purported medical gardens to public lands trespass cultivation sites. The samples will include indoor marijuana cultivation samples.

6. Statistical information is captured at the time of the seizure and is logged by the program. Any seizures not directly related to the unit (patrol and others) are reported to the unit to accurately reflect all county statistics. These are recorded and sent to the DCESP program by the program Deputy. Expenditure reports are compiled by the Sheriff administrative staff and they prepare the report for submission.

C. Requirements for DEA Funding: denote amount of funding for each category requested by your agency to accomplish program goals.

Note: Final allocated funds will be determined by DEA/HQS and is based on the agency's abilities, effectiveness, and program objectives. All expenditures for equipment and supplies/materials will require prior approval by DEA Headquarters.

	<i>Operational Funds</i>		<i>Amount</i>
a.	Aircraft Expenses	\$	\$100,000.00
b.	Clothing & Protective Gear	\$	\$5,000.00
c.	Container/Space Rental	\$	\$44,000.00
d.	Equipment ²	\$	\$3,000.00
e.	Miscellaneous Commercial Contracts	\$	\$50,000.00
f.	Overtime	\$	\$10,000.00
g.	Supplies/Materials ²	\$	\$2,000.00
h.	Training	\$	\$1,000.00
i.	Travel/Per Diem	\$	
j.	Vehicle Rental	\$	
	<i>Total:</i>	\$	\$215,000.00

D. Audits: Grantees and sub-grantees are responsible for obtaining audits in accordance with the Single Audit Act of 1984 and federal agency implementing regulations. An independent auditor, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards covering financial and compliance audits, shall make the audits.

Date of agency's last audit: June 30, 2016

III. Explain how your agency plans to coordinate with other Government Agencies (Program Participation and Resources Commitments):

A. U.S. Forest Service

COMMET works directly with US Forest Service law enforcement personnel exchanging information, providing assistance/ personnel to conduct investigations and coordinating marijuana raids on USFS property.

B. Intelligence and trends (cultivators, traffickers, distribution, etc.)

Intelligence is shared with any agencies that request information. The program is called to brief on current and past trends regarding marijuana at local and state levels.

V. List equipment your Agency proposes to purchase this year with DCE/SP funds:

Note: DCE/SP funds are intended to be used to purchase supplies and equipment directly related to the program activities. Though equipment/supplies may be specifically itemized in the Operational Proposal, they are not automatically approved for purchase. LOA equipment purchases should not exceed 10% of its allocated funds. Any exemptions require DEA Headquarters approval. All expenditures for equipment and supplies/materials will require prior approval by DEA Headquarters.

Only the purchase of supplies or services needed to further the eradication project including but not limited to gloves, pruning shears, burlap bags, special raid clothing, boots, GPS units and additional supplies for the over-flight school including but not limited to training, room rental, water, drink supplies and hospitality supplies. Supplies and equipment to outfit any part time marijuana eradication officers including but not limited to boots, special raid clothing, GPS units and eradication supplies. Fuel for the vehicles conducting marijuana investigations/eradication operations.

VI. Training Requirements:

A. Name of Agency Training Coordinator:

Name:

Marcus Young

Title:

Personnel Program Manager

Telephone No:

707-463-4110

Email Address:

young@mendocinocounty.org

Address Line 1:

951 Low Gap Road

Address Line 2:

City:

Ukiah

State:

CA

B. Describe any training your agency intends to conduct this year to include cannabis detection and eradication schools for other Federal agencies, National Guard, and state/local officers.³

If funding were available the program would like to start sponsoring the two week overflight school that had been held in Mendocino County for some years.

The first week of that training is for the officers from other States involved in marijuana eradication programs. The second week is for officers from the State of California DCE/SP programs. The purpose of the training is to educate law enforcement in the identification, confirmation and eradication of marijuana plants as seen from aerial platforms.

The most efficient way to identify marijuana gardens is by aerial observation. Marijuana planted in brush and cover is often difficult to see from the ground however when observed from an aircraft it is easily spotted based on the distinct color and shape of the marijuana plants and by the layout of the cultivation site.

The Mendocino County Sheriff's Office along with California DEA designed this training program in 1989 to train and certify law enforcement officers in marijuana observations. The class consists of both classroom training and practical observation of marijuana gardens. The course objective is met by students spotting and identifying marijuana gardens from the air. A raid is then conducted to confirm the plants are marijuana. This allows the officer to testify as an expert in the field of aerial observation of marijuana.

VII. Targeted Investigations:

A. Summary of law enforcement activities which your agency is conducting and/or plans to initiate during this year.

COMMET has been working closely with US Customs and Border Protection units to further identify, track, and apprehend persons involved the transportation of currency and marijuana, by air, to other areas of the county, state, and other states. This involves the use of small, unmanned, airports scattered throughout Mendocino County.

COMMET is currently assisting with several investigations on subjects who are producing marijuana in Mendocino County and shipping the finished product to other States. COMMET anticipates additional cases to be developed in 2017 regarding the out of State transportation of marijuana.

COMMET will continue to assist with California Department of Fish and Wildlife and identified and prosecuted subjects who were illegally diverting water from streams to grow marijuana and or causing serious environmental damage.

B. Summary of special or enforcement operations that your agency intends on conducting during the year.

COMMET will continue to investigate and eradicate marijuana found growing on public lands.

COMMET will aggressively investigate BHO operations and attempt to educate the public, firefighters and other first responders on signs that a BHO operation is occurring.

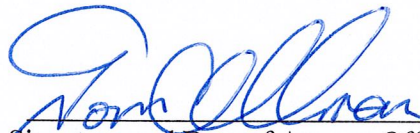
COMMET continues to answer calls for service from the public on marijuana cultivation sites on private lands and will continue to work closely with the corporate timber companies to eradicate marijuana gardens on their lands and provide security for the people who work in the corporate forests.

COMMET is an active investigative partner with US Customs and Border Protection units in the investigation of trafficking of currency and marijuana, by air, within Mendocino County.

VIII. National Environmental Policy Issues (*describe if applicable*)⁴:

COMMET has developed a working relationship with the Health & Human Services Agency Environmental Health Department and Air Quality Control Department of Mendocino County. Environmental Health and Air Quality advised of violations involving marijuana cultivation sites that use generators and store fuel for the generators as well as other hazardous materials. COMMET works with California Department of Forestry and Fish and Wildlife regarding illegal grading and water diversion violations involving marijuana cultivation sites. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife regularly sends one or more Game Wardens on day raids or multiple day raids planned by the COMMET Unit. The Warden's primary responsibility on these raids is to identify, document, and present environmental crimes to the District Attorney's Office for prosecution.

For assistance, please contact your State DEA DCE/SP Coordinator or DEA DCE/SP Regional Contractor.



8-15-2017

Signature and Date of Agency Official approving Annual Strategic Plan
(PLEASE SIGN IN BLUE INK)

Thomas D. Allman, Mendocino County Sheriff-Coroner

Print Name and Title of Agency Official approving Annual Strategic Plan

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Web-based DEA Internet Capability Endeavor (DICE) and TFOs with Firebird access to the DEA Analysis and Response Tracking System (DARTS): Effective in 2012, all participants in the DCE/SP are required to use DICE or DARTS for reporting statistics (on each incident), submission or reportable intelligence, deconfliction, and for the sharing of information.

² None of the Asset Forfeiture Funds allocated to you may be used to purchase promotional items, gifts, mementos, tokens of appreciation, or other similar items. These will include items justified as training aids if they are embossed, engraved, or printed with the agency or program logos. All expenditures for equipment and supplies/materials will require prior approval by DEA Headquarters.

³ Web-based DEA Internet Capability Endeavor (DICE) and TFOs with Firebird access to the DEA Analysis and Response Tracking System (DARTS): Effective in 2012, all participants in the DCE/SP are required to use DICE or DARTS for reporting statistics (on each incident), submission or reportable intelligence, deconfliction, and for the sharing of information.

⁴ The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to consider the potential effects on the human environment of major federal actions. Pursuant to NEPA, DEA has published regulations under which manual eradication in normally categorically excluded from further analysis, while herbicidal eradication normally requires preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA). Any proposed use or funding of herbicides should be described in this section.