

Operation ends with 35 arrests

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The four-day multi-agency marijuana eradication effort last week in Calaveras County ended with 35 arrests.

Seized in the raids of illegal growers were 28,650 marijuana plants, 12 opium pods, 31 tons of unprocessed marijuana, 1,898 pounds of processed marijuana, 13 firearms, one piece of body armor and more than \$50,000, came in one raid last Wednesday.

Personnel from the California Highway Patrol, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Department of Water Resources, California Department of Justice, CalFire, California National Guard Counterdrug Task Force, Calaveras County Code Compliance and Calaveras County Roads Department (Calaveras County Public Works Department) assisted the Sheriff's Office in the multi-site eradication operation called "Operation Terminus."

In addition to the arrests and seizures, criminal and environmental violations were discovered and are being pursued.

The agencies found 97 California Department of Fish & Wildlife violations, 29 water quality violations, 24 water rights violations and five CalFire land conversion cases.

Those environmental crimes included damage to the watersheds and waterways. Investigators also found illegal pesticide and herbicide use and evidence of marijuana growers discharging human waste into waterways.

Several locations contained dangerous conditions that could have caused wildland and or structure fires through unpermitted or substandard electrical connections or by placing running generators to operate in areas with dried grasses or fire fuels.

Operation Terminus criminal cases will be sent to the Calaveras County District Attorney's Office for review. The District Attorney has sworn in a specialized circuit prosecutor from the California District Attorney's Association to assist with the cases involving crimes against the environment.

The series of investigations leading to the raids began approximately six months ago and was titled "Operation Terminus."

"For those who are unfamiliar 'Terminus' means 'the end of the line,' "said Calaveras County Sheriff Rick DiBasilio. "We are working in partnership with allied agencies to work toward ending the line of a large group of marijuana growers who have come to Calaveras County from across the United States and other parts of California committing crimes and causing significant environmental damage in Calaveras County. Due to the nature of our watershed systems in Calaveras County the environmental damage beginning in our mountains and foothills has significant impact 'down to the end of the line' into other portions of California including the Central Valley and San Francisco Bay Area."