

# Daniel Boone National Forest

 NEWS

United States  
Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service  
Southern Region



Forest Supervisor  
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Winchester, KY 40391

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August 28, 1990

FOR RELEASE AS OF 12 NOON, AUGUST 28, 1990

## BENNETT VISITS INTERAGENCY STRIKE FORCE FIGHTING DRUG WAR ON PUBLIC LANDS IN KENTUCKY

Washington, D.C., August 28--William J. Bennett, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), visited the Daniel Boone National Forest today to see firsthand the results of a Kentucky-based interagency marijuana strike force operation.

According to F. Dale Robertson, Chief of the Forest Service, Bennett's visit highlights the efforts of the Forest Service, Department of Defense, and other Federal agencies to cooperate with the States in combating marijuana cultivation on Federal forest lands.

Robertson said that the Forest Service is concerned about the environmental and safety threats created by the production of this illegal crop. Marijuana growers frequently are armed and often place booby traps within their cultivation sites, making it dangerous for forest visitors to use these public lands. Booby-trap use has increased drastically in the last 2 years on the Daniel Boone National Forest, as evidenced by the increase in

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booby trap seizures from 33 in 1988 to 145 in 1989. In addition, the unregulated use of pesticides, rodenticides, and other chemicals by marijuana growers contaminates soil and water and kills animals that ingest the poisons.

Bennett and Robertson said that credit for the drug war successes on forest lands goes to cooperative interagency forces such as the one in Kentucky called "The Governor's Marijuana Strike Force." Sponsored by Kentucky Governor Wallace G. Wilkinson, members include the Governor's Office For a Drug Free Kentucky, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Drug Enforcement Administration, Kentucky Army National Guard, Civil Air Patrol, USDA-Forest Service, Kentucky Sheriffs Association, the Kentucky State Police, the Attorney General's Office of the State of Kentucky, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife, Kentucky Water Patrol, and the U.S. Attorney's Offices in the Eastern and Western Districts of Kentucky.

Last year, the Daniel Boone National Forest had the largest production of cannabis in the National Forest System. One-third of the marijuana grown in the National Forest System was discovered in the Daniel Boone Forest. Out of 429,000 illegal plants destroyed last year, 158,000 were found in Daniel Boone lands at 1,480 separate sites.

It appears that 1990 will break previous records in the Daniel Boone National Forest. By late August this year, over 160,000 plants had already been destroyed at 680 different sites.

Bennett, who spent the day with the strike force surveying fields of 12-15 foot high marijuana plants, called the strike force's work on the Daniel Boone

National Forest "vital." "Our National Forests and other public lands were not established to be used as private drug farms by gangsters," Bennett said.

"They were set aside for the safe and lawful enjoyment of ordinary Americans. This operation, and others like it around the country, are designed to insure that Federal land remains what it should be: off limits to drug dealers."

Tommy Fields, operations leader for Governor Wilkinson's Marijuana Strike Force, was encouraged by Bennett's visit to the Daniel Boone National Forest. "Growing marijuana on Federal and private lands is a tremendous problem in Kentucky and we're delighted that we are working together to get a handle on the situation," he said.

END



Reply To: 1610

Date: JUL 26 1990

Subject: Public Notification Action Plan for 1990 Marijuana Eradication

To: District Rangers, DBNF

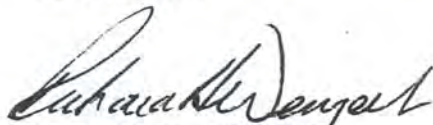
Enclosed you will find the final 1990 Action Plan designed to keep Forest users informed about the Forest's marijuana eradication efforts.

Note that District Rangers have responsibilities for carrying out portions of this Action Plan:

- \* Ensure that appropriate employees wear their uniform while performing field activities.
- \* Discuss the marijuana growing problem at employee family meetings, ensuring that employees, contractors, and other Forest users are aware of what to look for and how to appropriately react should they encounter a marijuana garden.
- \* Distribute WeTip posters to local businesses. The SO will be distributing these posters to the Districts by the end of July.
- \* Hand-deliver a news release to local media concerning where to report information concerning marijuana growing on National Forest land. This release will be sent to you by the end of July.
- \* Distribute information concerning sensitive information (the yellow sheets) to appropriate employees.
- \* Discuss emergency procedures (pink sheets) with District law enforcement officers and key employees.

A major emphasis of this Action Plan is a media raid (page 7) which will require assistance from the London and possibly Redbird Districts. Tentatively, plans are to hold the morning briefing at the London District Office. Dan Kincaid, Incident Information Officer for the Marijuana Eradication Incident Command Team, will be coordinating this effort. Dan and I will be counting on your assistance to make this effort successful.

Should you have any questions about this Action Plan, please contact Bob Strosnider.

  
RICHARD H. WENGERT  
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure

cc: Dan Kincaid

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## Forest Service Agent Works to Help Control Illegal Marijuana Growing on Daniel Boone National Forest

July 26, 1990 - For Immediate Release

Although he recognizes that there is still a lot of work to be done, Harper Corder feels that the Daniel Boone National Forest has made great strides in controlling marijuana growing on its public lands.

Corder, a U.S. Forest Service law enforcement special agent, is the officer-in-charge for the day-to-day marijuana eradication effort. He's stationed at London, Kentucky, in the southern part of the Daniel Boone National Forest, where the problem is most severe. In recent months, Corder has spend 90 percent of his time on the marijuana problem.

Statistics flow easily from Corder's mouth. "Up to one-third of the marijuana grown on public land in this country comes from Kentucky," Corder said. "For the last two years the Daniel Boone has been the worst problem area of all the 155 national forests. We're working hard to change that."

Corder's job is difficult and complex. Daily he directs Forest Service law enforcement officers who may be involved in a variety of jobs ranging from aerial detection to surveillance on-the-ground, and from making court appearances to plotting information on topography maps. Corder's efforts include close communication with local sheriff departments and other law enforcement agencies, and, more recently, with the Governor's Task Force for a Drug Free Kentucky. He feels that joint cooperative efforts will be essential

add one

Another difficult aspect of Corder's job is dealing with the general public, which at times doesn't seem to fully understand the problem. Two questions which Corder frequently hears are, "Why do people grow marijuana on the national forest?" and "Why does it matter anyway?"

"People plant marijuana patches on the national forest because of forfeiture and seizure laws," explained Corder. "Simply put, if caught growing it on their own land, they could stand to lose their property. Also, the national forest offers them better opportunities - it's more secluded, more difficult for us to find, and so forth."

"As for why it matters," Corder continued, "the first thing is that marijuana is an illegal drug. It's a crime to grow or possess it. We can't condone that on national forests. And the second major problem is visitor safety. There are increasing occurrences of people encountering booby traps in the woods and of folks being physically threatened when they stumble too close to an unknown marijuana patch."

Corder also pointed out that marijuana growers cause Forest Service personnel extra problems, too. In addition to the personal safety factor, Forest Service employees face the added difficulty of having to adjust work projects because of marijuana patches.

"Sometimes these problems can cause us to alter plans for such things as wildlife management, hiking trail construction, and timber sales" said Corder. "The delays, changes, and cancellations cost us, and the taxpayer, time and money. Also, we have found evidence where marijuana growers have used pesticides and other toxic substances around their illegal plots. These poisons can be harmful to people, as well as fish and wildlife, and can cause significant damage to such resources as soil, water, and forest vegetation."

add two

Corder said that initial Forest Service efforts were made in the traditional manner---locating and eradicating marijuana patches. That's as in "whacking, stacking, and burning it," Corder said. But recently, with increased funding, manpower, and interagency cooperation, more effort has been placed on surveillance with, hopefully, more arrests and prosecutions to follow.

"We think that will have a greater long-term deterrent effect on the growers," said Corder. "But we'll still be cutting and burning a whole lot of marijuana. No doubt about it."

In addition to more people and money being targeted to help solve the problem, Corder and his troops are "trying to work smarter and more efficiently, rather than just harder all the time," he said. "We're involved with testing some high tech equipment to help us locate marijuana and determine who the grower is. We're also working at better intelligence-gathering and information-sharing within the law enforcement community. We continue to develop new and better ways, and different management techniques, to help us in the war on drugs."

Corder urged anyone having information about illegal marijuana growing on the Daniel Boone National Forest to report it to one of the local Ranger District offices, which are located in Morehead, Stanton, Berea, London, Somerset, Big Creek, and Whitley City. Or if you would rather leave an anonymous tip, call the toll-free national WeTip hotline at (800) 78-CRIME. Make sure you give complete and accurate information.

"Our long-term goal is to make national forest areas safer for the visitors," said Corder. "We've shown considerable progress and we know we're making a difference. But we've got a ways to go before we'll be satisfied."

## STRIKE FORCE FACTS AND FIGURES

The Governor's Marijuana Strike Force, a cooperative effort among 13 state and federal agencies, is Kentucky's official marijuana eradication program. Created by executive order earlier this year, the Strike Force utilizes the manpower and resources of the Kentucky Attorney General's office; U.S. District Attorney, Eastern and Western Districts; Civil Air Patrol; Drug Enforcement Administration; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Kentucky Fish and Wildlife; U.S. Forestry Service; Kentucky National Guard; Kentucky Sheriff's Association; Kentucky State Police; Kentucky Water Patrol; and the Governor's Office for a Drug-Free Kentucky.

The Strike Force is under the leadership of Director Gary Faulkner. Daily activities are coordinated by Operations Director Major Tommy Fields. The Strike Force has five daily eradication teams, totaling 125 personnel, which can be directed on an as needed basis. Each participating agency funds its participation in the Strike Force from its own budget. In addition, the Kentucky National Guard is spending a special \$3.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Defense earmarked for eradication, the fifth largest of its kind and the largest given to a non-U.S. border state.

Law Enforcement officials estimate a pound of marijuana carries a street value of \$1,000. Using that figure, the total amount of marijuana destroyed in Kentucky from Jan. 1 to Aug. 25, 1990 carries a street value of more than \$2.8 billion.

### Eradication Statistics

	<u>Plants</u>	<u>Plots</u>	<u>Arrests</u>	<u>Traps</u>
1990	284,687	<del>12,203</del> 1,891	108	28 *
1989	439,113	2,979	244	88
1988	414,579	2,538	177	**

\* through Saturday, August 25, 1990.

\*\* Records not available.

# DANIEL BOONE NATIONAL FOREST

## Marijuana Eradication Effort

	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>
# of Plants Eradicated*	70,474	123,994	157,967	206,882
# of Plots Eradicated	520	1,354	1,480	1,020
# of Booby Traps	11	33	145	26**
# of Arrests Made	5	16	20	21

\* Plants average a street value of approximately \$1000 per plant

\*\* Most Booby traps are generally found in September during peak harvest times