

August 27, 2021

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Alex Padilla
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Subject: Robust funding to support efforts to identify, reclaim, and prevent trespass cannabis grows on public lands

Dear Senators Feinstein and Padilla:

We, the undersigned conservation, recreation, equity, and veteran's organizations, strongly support robust funding in the Fiscal Year 2022 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill for efforts by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service, and National Park Service to identify, reclaim, and prevent trespass cannabis grows on public lands.

As you know, for decades our National Parks, National Forests, and BLM lands have suffered from trespass cultivation. This activity has resulted in thousands of trespass grows in California and, increasingly, other states as well. Unfortunately, due to a lack of resources, we do not actually know the full extent of the trespass grow crisis. One experimental satellite study identified over 150 sites in the South Fork Trinity River watershed in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest alone. It is therefore likely that a concerted effort to identify current and former grows will reveal thousands of sites in California.

Even our deserts are not safe. Large scale grows have proliferated in the desert in recent months. Indeed, BLM California State Office staff have identified the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) as the BLM holdings most threatened in the state by trespass grows and associated water theft. This is especially destructive in the desert where the scarce water sources are of critical importance to wildlife and often have important Native American cultural values.

Whether in the CDCA or in our National Forests and National Parks, the impacts are often similar: mounds of abandoned garbage and other waste, the profligate use of toxic chemicals (many of which are banned for use in the United States), poisoned, poached, and crushed wildlife, dams and water diversions, and grading and removal of vegetation. In addition, trespass grow operations often cause fires, including the Dolan fire of 2020 in the Los Padres National Forest that killed several California condors and caused a debris flow that closed

Highway 1. The scope and scale of the problem in California has increased dramatically, greatly exceeding the current ability of federal agencies to address it.

This issue also seriously impacts recreationists. For example, growers have threatened public land users and have even blocked legally-open roads and trails to deter public access. A recent study in Trinity County found that trespass-grow related chemicals are appearing in the tissue of species such as mule deer that are important to hunters and local Tribes. For more information on the impacts of trespass grows, please visit www.cropproject.org

The House of Representatives approved robust funding to tackle this issue in the Fiscal Year 2022 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. We urge the Senate to do so as well and to pursue other opportunities to address this issue.

Thank you for your continued leadership on public lands conservation.

Sincerely,



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