

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 13, 2009

The Honorable Janet Napolitano
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable R. Gil Kerlikowske
Office of National Drug Control Policy
750 Seventeenth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Chief Tom Tidwell
U.S. Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Ms. Michele Leonhart
Acting Administrator
Drug Enforcement Administration
8701 Morrissette Dr.
Springfield, VA 22152

Mr. Bob Abbey
Director
Bureau of Land Management
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Napolitano, Mr. Kerlikowske, Mr. Tidwell, Ms. Leonhart,
and Mr. Abbey,

Marijuana cultivation on our nation's public lands presents an alarming, and growing, public safety concern in the Congressional districts we represent, many of which include millions of acres of federally owned land. As such, we are very concerned by reports from local law enforcement leaders that necessary federal assistance and cooperation in combating this illegal drug production has recently declined. We would like to request a meeting to discuss your agencies' current efforts to combat this growing threat, and plans for increasing cooperation between all federal agencies involved and their state and local partners.

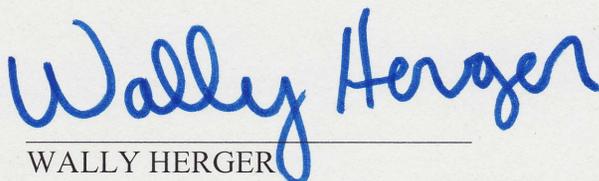
According to local law enforcement, Mexican drug cartels are operating large-scale marijuana plantations on public lands. This illegal activity poses a direct threat to public safety as drug traffickers are increasingly turning to violence to protect their marijuana crops and have fired at federal and local law enforcement officers on a number of recent occasions. Such violence is especially worrisome in that it is taking place in some of our nation's most prominent and widely-used recreation areas. It is common for hikers and other recreationists to encounter illegal plantations in remote areas, thus inadvertently placing themselves in great danger. The issue is becoming so severe that local sheriffs' offices may have to start telling visitors that they should stay away from public lands and our recreational areas. Americans should not be subject to such risk while enjoying their public lands. In addition, these plantations pose a significant threat to the health of our lands. Illegal marijuana growers spray considerable quantities of unregulated chemicals, pesticides, and fertilizers, leave behind tons of trash and other debris, and tap into streams and other waterways in order to construct fairly complex irrigation systems.

Despite significant raids over the years, illegal drug production on public lands continues to grow. One of the largest and most successful marijuana eradication operations, Operation Alesia, was spearheaded in 2007 by the Shasta County Sheriff's Office in Northern California. This successful operation was the result of federal, state, and local cooperation. Given this past success, it is concerning to hear that assistance from federal agencies in certain areas has declined since that time, despite the continued expansion of drug cartels' well funded efforts. As a result, local law enforcement agencies are struggling to keep pace with this continuing problem and will likely run out of funding for eradication operations before the outdoor growing season ends this year.

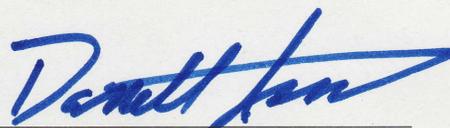
We believe ending eradication efforts and telling the public to stay away while Mexican drug cartels take over our federal lands is not an acceptable option. This is not just a local problem; this is primarily a federal problem. Illegal aliens, who are members of drug cartels, are establishing these robust and dangerous marijuana plantations on federal lands. Continued support and cooperation from federal agencies are critical to eliminating this threat. We are therefore requesting the opportunity to meet with all of you, and/or your designees, to discuss short and long-term solutions to this growing danger on federal lands, including but not limited to, ensuring inter-agency coordination, identifying funding and other resource needs, and making sure this is a high law enforcement priority within your respective agencies.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to meeting with you to discuss this critical issue. A member of our staff will be following up with your legislative affairs staff to find a mutually convenient time.

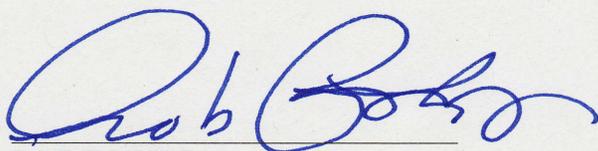
Sincerely,



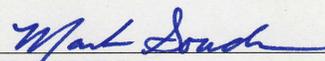
WALLY HERGER
Member of Congress



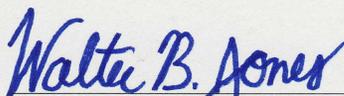
DARRELL ISSA
Member of Congress



ROB BISHOP
Member of Congress



MARK SOUDER
Member of Congress



WALTER JONES
Member of Congress