

(Washington, DC) - Congressman Herger today spoke on the floor of the House of Representatives about the need to increase funding for law enforcement efforts to reduce drug trafficking on federal lands. In particular, there is a serious need for such funding in California's 2nd Congressional District, where marijuana cultivation and trafficking by Mexican drug cartels are prevalent. Herger engaged the Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies in a "colloquy," which is a formal conversation between Members of the House designed to draw attention to an issue and bolster the legislative history regarding measures being debated on the floor. Colloquies are inserted in the Congressional Record and help provide guidance to Executive Branch agencies regarding the intent of Congress. The transcript of the discussion is attached. Video and audio of it can be found at: <http://www.house.gov/herger> .

Herger issued the following statement regarding the problem of drug trafficking on federal lands:

"It is simply outrageous that organized drug cartels headquartered in Mexico are using our National Forest and Park System as a safe haven for illegal drug production. Northern Californians who work in the National Forest or National Parks, or those who visit our public lands to hunt, fish, hike, and camp, must be protected from this menace.

"I commend federal, state, and local law enforcement officials for taking on the dangerous task of shutting down illegal drug manufacturing operations. Arrests and eradication efforts are up dramatically, but regrettably more work needs to be done. Though this problem is national in scope, it is critical the funds are targeted to the areas that are suffering the worst. That includes the Mendocino, Klamath, and Shasta-Trinity National Forests, and Whiskeytown National Recreation Area in Northern California."

Congress has provided increased funding to combat this problem for each of the last seven years. The FY 2008 Interior Appropriations Bill provides an additional \$8.8 million for law enforcement on the National Forest and \$29 million for the National Parks. The Herger-Dicks colloquy provides direction to these agencies to ensure that sufficient funds are available for eradication efforts in Northern California.

Colloquy Between Rep. Wally Herger and Chairman Norman Dicks

RE: Provisions in Interior Appropriations Bill
Relating to Efforts to Combat Drug Trafficking on National Forests and Parks

June 26, 2007

Rep. Herger: I thank the Chairman for yielding. Mr. Chairman, over the past several years we have seen the rise of a very disturbing trend on federal lands: the creation of a billion dollar international drug trafficking ring. Organized criminal gangs headquartered in Mexico have illegally entered our country and have established large scale marijuana growing operations in our National Forests and National Parks.

Gang members guarding these illegal "pot gardens" have been armed with automatic weapons and given orders to "shoot to kill" anyone who "trespasses" in the area. Hunters, recreators, and federal employees in my district and others have been shot at when recreating or working on federal lands.

Eight of the nation's ten worst National Forests in terms of illegal marijuana production are located in California. Three of those eight problem areas are located in my congressional district of Northern California: the Shasta-Trinity, the Klamath, and the Mendocino National Forest. Our nation's National Parks are also victim to illegal occupation by Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations. Regrettably, my home state of California suffers the worst of the infestation on Park Service lands as well. This includes a very serious problem at the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area in my district where illegal marijuana grows have been discovered within a few hundred yards of popular boating and fishing areas.

Chairman Dicks: Yes, that is the intention of this legislation. We want to work with the gentleman on this important issue. And we are very concerned about this problem, and we think it deserves our complete attention.

Rep. Herger: I thank the Chairman and greatly appreciate his efforts, and the efforts of Ranking Member Tiahrt, to improve public safety on federal recreation lands. Is it the Committee's

intention in granting this increase to ensure that these funds should be used to help dismantle and eradicate Mexican drug trafficking organizations in our National Forests and Parks?

Chairman Dicks: Completely agree with the gentleman. The increase is necessary in order to deal with this very serious problem, and we will continue to work with the gentleman as we go to Conference with the Senate. And we'll do the best we can to help on this important issue.

Rep. Herger: And again, I thank the Chairman for that clarification.

Further, while I believe it would be inappropriate for those of us in Congress to micromanage the efforts of law enforcement as they work to dismantle these illegal drug networks by allocating funds only to specific areas, is the Chairman able clarify the Committee's intention with regard to the distribution of funds throughout the nation?

Is it the Committee's aim to ensure that the funds allocated are targeted to areas of the country that face the highest concentration of drug trafficking activity?

Chairman Dicks: Yes, it is. I appreciate the gentleman bringing this to our attention. It definitely is. We should focus the resources on those areas where the problem is the most severe. And if we have any problem with this, I'd be glad to work with the gentleman, with the agencies involved, to make certain that that happens.

Rep. Herger: And again, I thank the gentleman from Washington and also the Ranking Member, Mr. Tiahrt. Thank you. I yield back my time.