INTRODUCTION

Florida’s warm climate and wide-ranging rural woodlands provide a fertile environment for criminals to cultivate cannabis plants (marijuana). The eradication of cannabis plants at the source immediately strikes a blow against drug dealing and abuse by reducing the availability of marijuana on the street. Eradicating marijuana before it can be cultivated also increases citizen and officer safety and reduces overall investigative costs.

Through the coordination of the Domestic Marijuana Eradication (DME) Program, federal, state and local law enforcement authorities have found a cost-effective and measurable means to prevent a sizable amount of domestically cultivated marijuana from reaching the street. This is evidenced in the statistical success of Florida’s DME Program and its federal counterpart, the United States Drug Enforcement Administration’s (DEA) Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program (DCE/SP). For over 30 years, the combination of these two programs and the support they have received from federal, state and local law enforcement authorities has resulted in the detection of 34,944 illegal grow sites; eradication of over 2.7 million marijuana plants valued at over $11.6 billion; and the arrest of over 18,473 cultivators in Florida (historical data provided on page 4).

Since its inception in 1981, Florida’s DME Program has set national standards and served as a role model for other states. In addition to being known for its progressive program, Florida’s DME Program is also noted for its specialized law enforcement training in the areas of aerial detection and indoor grow investigations.

The success of Florida’s DME Program is due to its ability to support law enforcement efforts and adapt to the changing culture of the illicit cultivator. The initial focus of Florida’s DME Program was primarily on the outdoor cultivation of marijuana. However, due to the success of aerial detection programs and the increase in Florida’s urbanization, the illicit cultivator has expanded indoors. For this reason, Florida’s DME Program continues to support law enforcement efforts to eradicate both indoor and outdoor marijuana grow sites. In 2019, the program was managed and administered by the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement (OALE).

In 2008, recognizing the issues Florida law enforcement faced in the fight against indoor grow houses, the Florida Legislature passed a law reducing the number of plants needed to be grown in order to be charged with trafficking and strengthened the penalties for certain circumstances. This law went into effect July 1, 2008 and appeared to be effective as reported eradication statistics continued to show a reduction from previous annual eradication totals.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The DME is a voluntary program offered to local agencies through OALE. Each year, DEA allocates funds to OALE which are then dispersed to local law enforcement agencies for training and reimbursement to offset spending for indoor and outdoor grow investigations. During 2019, OALE expended $181,271.85 for the DME program.

This 2019 Annual Report reflects statistical information provided by 9 law enforcement agencies in 8 Florida counties, including 8 sheriff’s offices and one municipal law enforcement agency. Florida’s DME Program directly disbursed $105,075.00 in funds to three law enforcement agencies for flight time related to aerial detection of outdoor marijuana grow operations.

Florida’s DME Program funds are also utilized to provide in-depth training to law enforcement officers at little cost to their agency. In support of this effort, OALE sponsored one (1) Indoor Cannabis Investigations School, and one (1) Outdoor Cannabis Investigations/Aerial Detection Schools in 2019. The schools were attended by 52 law enforcement officers from 31 law enforcement agencies, including 20 sheriff’s offices, 8 police departments, 1 state agency and 2 federal agencies. OALE expended $76,196.85 (25.4% of total DME funds) in training-related expenses for law enforcement officers during 2019.
2019 GROW ACTIVITIES

In 2019, the reported seizures of marijuana from outdoor grow sites outpaced seizures from indoor grow sites. Indoor and outdoor cultivators continue to develop innovative techniques and schemes to avoid detection by law enforcement.

Despite these evasion efforts, county and local law enforcement agencies reported 8 of Florida’s 67 counties detected and dismantled 133 indoor and outdoor grow sites. This resulted in the eradication of 4,100 marijuana plants, 588.28 pounds of processed marijuana, 20 arrests and the forfeiture of $3,323.00 in assets.

Hillsborough County lead the state with indoor grow sites (18), along with indoor grow plants (741). Holmes County led the state with outdoor grow sites (51) as well as outdoor grow plants (2,445).

PROGRAM COORDINATOR INFORMATION

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DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION (DEA)
SPECIAL AGENT MICHAEL PULLEN
TALLAHASSEE RESIDENT OFFICE
1510 COMMONWEALTH BUSINESS DRIVE
TALLAHASSEE, FL 32303
OFFICE: (850) 350-7312
FAX: (850) 576-2118
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>GROW SITES</th>
<th>PLANTS ERADICATED</th>
<th>ARRESTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>4,100</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>$4.7 Million*</td>
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Grand Total: 34,944  2,750,870  18,473  $11.6 Billion

*Figures compiled using a base of $3,500 average per pound for domestic indoor grown marijuana; $775 average per pound for outdoor grown marijuana, based on average wholesale amounts published in the USDOJ National Illicit Drug Prices Bulletin- June 2008.
## 2019 STATISTICS BY COUNTY

### INDOOR

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<tr>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>SITES</th>
<th>PLANTS</th>
<th>PROCESSED POUNDS</th>
<th>ARRESTS</th>
<th>FIREARMS SEIZED</th>
<th>ASSETS</th>
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### OUTDOOR

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

Florida’s 2019 Domestic Marijuana Eradication Program concluded with statistics in all categories as reported to the DEA.

Evaluations of the training programs offered by the DME Program continue to indicate that training in aerial detection methods and indoor grow investigations must continue to keep pace with illicit marijuana cultivation activity in the state.

With the coordinated efforts of Florida’s law enforcement communities, the mission to suppress this internal drug problem was a success in 2019. With Florida’s continued commitment by local, state, and federal law enforcement, 2020 will prove to have a substantial impact on domestically cultivated marijuana.

DOMESTIC MARIJUANA ERADICATION PROGRAM

Information can be found at the following web address:

https://www.fdacs.gov/Business-Services/Domestic-Marijuana-Eradication

For questions or additional program information, please contact:

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