



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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PRESS RELEASE

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ADDITIONAL CANNABIS ABATEMENT ACTIONS ANNOUNCED

Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office personnel assigned to the Cannabis Licensing Office conducted enforcement activities this week at various locations in the vicinity of Westbranch Road in Soquel.

Investigators executed search warrants at three unpermitted cannabis operations, seizing 990 cannabis plants, nearly 213 pounds of processed cannabis flower, 440 cannabis "vape" cartridges, more than \$9,100 in cash, three-quarters of a pound of cannabis concentrate, and more than 1,000 units of cannabis candies individually wrapped in child-friendly packaging.

The candies did not include adequate warning labels alerting parents or children of the contents. Candies included candy rope necklaces with cartoon designs and gummy bears labeled "Bearly Legal", displaying cartoon bears on the exterior packaging. The product packaging does not comply with State regulations, but it is unknown if the products were being packaged on site or brought in from out of state.

At two of the sites, residents were issued a total of \$15,000 worth of administrative citations, for commercial cultivation, distribution and manufacturing without a license.

Investigators also searched two other properties: on the 600 block of Westbranch Road, 101 cannabis plants were seized; on the 500 block of Westbranch Road, 358 cannabis plants seized and the resident was issued an \$5,000 administrative citation for commercial cultivation and manufacturing.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife took part in the investigation to ensure water was not being diverted from local contributory streams and creeks for the non-permitted cultivations.

During 2019, Sheriff's Office personnel assigned to the Cannabis Licensing Office have conducted 63 site visits, serving 42 search warrants and issuing 112 administrative citations. As part of those operations, 12 firearms, 49,000 cannabis plants, 2,700 pounds of processed cannabis flower and 13 pounds of processed cannabis concentrate have been seized.