

# **\* NEWS RELEASE \***

## **CANNABIS GROWER RECEIVES 270 DAYS JAIL AND FELONY PROBATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES COMMITTED AT TRESPASS SITE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Monterey County District Attorney Dean D. Flippo announced today that 29-year-old Jose Roberto Meneses, a resident of Kern County, was sentenced to 3 years of felony probation, 270 days in county jail, a \$5,000 fine, and a \$5,000 contribution to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Preservation Fund for environmental crimes committed at an illegal trespass cannabis grow site. Monterey County Superior Court Judge Carrie M. Panetta presided.

On July 6, 2018, wildlife wardens from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's ("CDFW") Marijuana Permitting Team, assisted by investigators from the Monterey County District Attorney's Office Bureau of Investigations, conducted an eradication of an illegal cannabis grow site found on California-American Water Company ("Cal-Am") property. Mr. Meneses, was found on site tending to the cannabis plants. Initially, upon seeing law enforcement, Mr. Meneses attempted to flee. A K-9 unit was deployed and successfully apprehended him. Cal-Am confirmed that it did not authorize the illegal grow site.

The outdoor cannabis grow site was approximately 1.25 acres in size and contained a total of 4,497 cannabis plants at various stages of growth. A makeshift campsite was found near the grow site containing personal items including a sleeping bag, food, and a toothbrush. Dangerous pesticides were found on site. At the base of a tree, law enforcement found a plastic water bottle containing Carbofuran, which is illegal in the U.S. and is highly toxic. Experts opine that just a quarter of a teaspoon can kill a human if ingested. Law enforcement also found an empty container of "Ratone," an unregistered pesticide containing zinc phosphide, which is poisonous to wildlife. A dead wild rabbit believed to have been killed by a harmful pesticide was found on site.

Mr. Meneses watered his cannabis plants using a gravity-fed system of plastic water lines that extended for over a mile to an active water source. Law enforcement discovered that the water was being diverted from an active tributary to the Carmel River. CDFW estimated that over 1.6 million gallons of water had been diverted without authorization. After the water lines were collected, a helicopter had to be used to transport the lines for disposal.

On November 6, 2018, Meneses entered no contest pleas to possessing and using a restricted material, Carbofuran, a state prison felony; depositing a hazardous substance upon the land of another without permission, a felony; substantially diverting the natural flow of a stream without a Lake/Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, a misdemeanor; and unlawfully killing a wild rabbit, a misdemeanor.

Wardens from CDFW's Marijuana Permitting Team and investigators with the Monterey County District Attorney Bureau of Investigations investigated this case.