



NEWS and INFORMATION
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TWENTY-TWO SEARCH WARRANTS SERVED IN LARGEST ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEFT INVESTIGATION IN PACIFIC NORTHWEST

The Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service today announced the service of twenty-two federal search warrants in Central and Southeast Oregon, which relate to an ongoing two year criminal investigation, targeting the suspected theft and illegal sale of archaeological resources obtained from public lands.

Service of the search warrants, which occurred from Tuesday, January 25 through Friday, January 28, was spearheaded by the BLM and Forest Service, and involved the participation of agents from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigations (IRS-CI), the Oregon State Police (OSP), and other local police departments and sheriff offices.

The search warrants were served in Bend, Redmond, Lakeview, LaPine, Bly, Christmas Valley, Terrebonne, and Paisley and resulted in the seizure of thousands of artifacts as well as firearms, controlled substances, and illegally possessed wildlife parts.

Under federal law, it is illegal to remove, possess or sell artifacts obtained from public lands. According to Ron Pugh, Assistant Special Agent in Charge of Forest Service Law Enforcement Investigations, Pacific Northwest Region, *“This is the largest investigation of suspected archaeological theft and sale of illegally-obtained artifacts in the Pacific Northwest. We take allegations of archaeological theft very seriously. Clues to our history are being robbed from the public, depriving us of an ability to better understand our past.”*

According to Craig Magill, Special Agent in Charge, BLM Law Enforcement, Oregon-Washington, *“Our public lands contain disappearing archaeological and historic sites which need to be protected from looting. Information provided by the public has been critical in our ability to investigate and prosecute those who illegally remove and profit from the theft of artifacts from public lands.”*

Anyone with information about theft from cultural sites is encouraged to call 1-800-333-SAVE (7238).

No charges of archaeological theft have yet been filed in this continuing investigation.

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