Study: Weed can be worse for forests than logging

Tree leaves and needles are removed because they block sunlight needed for marijuana crops. Photo/USFS

By Kaleigh Rogers, Motherboard

From guzzling water to pesticide pollution, it's been long established that growing weed—legally or not—isn't great for the environment. But a recent study published in the journal "Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment" shows that, at least by some measures, it can be even worse for the environment than logging.

By comparing GIS data in Northern California from 2000 to 2013, researchers found that while logging has a greater impact overall, weed can be even more destructive on a per-unit-area basis. That's because illegal cannabis grow ops are typically buried deep in the woods, are irregular in size and shape, and are scattered around randomly.

Compared to logging, which typically occurs in large, clear-cut swaths at the edge of the forest, this can have a serious

impact on what should be the most protected part of the forest: its core.

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