

# Louisiana launching medical marijuana after years of waiting

By Melinda Deslatte  
The Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — Louisiana became the first Deep South state to dispense medical marijuana on Tuesday, four years after state lawmakers agreed to give patients access to therapeutic cannabis.

Nine pharmacies are licensed to dispense medical marijuana across Louisiana and most are expected to open this week. Louisiana joins more than 30 other states that allow medical marijuana in some form. And though marijuana is banned at the federal level, a congressional amendment blocks the Justice Department from interfering with states' medical marijuana programs.

GB Sciences, one of two state-sanctioned growers, will begin shipping medical marijuana to Louisiana's registered dispensaries Tuesday morning, after state regulators recently completed final tests and cleared it for release.

Hundreds of patients in Louisiana have been awaiting the start of the program after years of work by lawmakers, who created the regulatory framework in 2015 for dispensing the cannabis. There also have been regulatory disputes and other hurdles.

State Sen. Fred Mills, a pharmacist in St. Martin Parish who sponsored the medical marijuana law, never thought it would take years for patients to gain access. He said he has repeatedly received "difficult calls" from people with cancer, seizures and other debilitating conditions and their family members asking when cannabis will reach pharmacy shelves.

"The toughest thing has been not being able to give people a definitive timeline that they could make plans for," Mills said.

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pected to open this week. It joins more than 30 other states that allow medical marijuana in some form. And though marijuana is banned at the federal level, a congressional amendment blocks the Justice Department from interfering with states' medical marijuana programs.

"We're super-excited. The first patient will be getting medical marijuana here," said Randy Mire, owner of Capitol Wellness Solutions in Baton Rouge, one of the nine dispensaries authorized statewide.

Mire said he'll see three patients Tuesday — two cancer patients and a veteran with post-traumatic stress disorder. But he has hundreds more waiting. To avoid a rush at the pharmacy, Capitol Wellness Solutions scheduled appointments for patients to pick up the liquid tinctures that will be the first medical marijuana product available — bottles that come with a dropper for patients

to use. Doug Boudreaux, a pharmacist and co-owner of the Shreveport medical marijuana dispensary Hope Pharmacy, is taking a similar approach, opening Tuesday for patients by appointment only.

"We should have all of the patients taken care of in the next six days," he said. "We've been calling patients for the past week and a half."

Only the Louisiana State University and Southern University agricultural centers are authorized to grow medicinal-grade pot.

Regulatory disagreements between GB Sciences, LSU's grower, and state regulators in Louisiana's agriculture department slowed getting the product to shelves, with medical marijuana advocates claiming the agency created unnecessary regulatory hurdles.

Meanwhile, Southern broke ties with the first company it chose to grow

marijuana, delaying its efforts. Southern's new grower Ilera Holistic Healthcare planted its first crop two weeks ago and estimates its first product could be available by fall at the earliest.

Under the 2015 law and additional changes passed since then, Louisiana is allowing medical marijuana to treat a long list of diseases and disorders, such as cancer, seizure disorders, epilepsy, glaucoma, post-traumatic stress disorder and Parkinson's disease.

Doctors won't issue a prescription but a "physician recommendation" a legal nuance aimed at keeping doctors from jeopardizing their medical licenses because federal law prohibits prescribing marijuana. Eighty-eight doctors around the state

have been approved for the Louisiana permit required to offer medical-grade pot to patients.

Marijuana can be available in oils, pills, liquids, topical applications and an inhaler, such as that used by asthma patients — but not in a smokeable form.

GB Sciences' first product will be the liquid tinctures, in three different concentrations. John Davis, GB Sciences Louisiana president, said he expects to have dissolving strips taken by mouth available in a month, followed by topical creams.

Pharmacies set their own price for the products, and insurance won't be covering the cost, so patients will have to pay out of pocket. Mire said the cost at his pharmacy will range from \$99 to \$200 per product.

## Umatilla National Forest advertises for permanent fire job opportunities

EO Media Group staff

PENDLETON — The Umatilla National Forest will be accepting applications for numerous permanent fire positions until Aug. 28. Positions are available at multiple skill and qualification levels ranging from entry level firefighter positions to assistant fire management officers.

The Forest is looking for committed, hardworking, highly skilled applicants to suppress wildfire and work in fuels management. The fire and aviation program is rewarding and requires working safely as a team in a variety of specialized positions including engine crews, handcrews and assistant fire management officers.

Applicants interested in these jobs should apply

through [www.usajobs.gov](http://www.usajobs.gov). All applicants who have applied to the announcements on or before the listed cutoff date, and are found to be qualified and in the quality group, will be referred for consideration to the selecting officials by early November 2019. The Forest Service is using a centralized fire hire process where most positions across the nation will be filled using the same vacancy announcement numbers.

Representatives from each Forest in Oregon and Washington will meet in early November and make recommendations for selections on their own units. During the permanent fire hiring event, positions that are vacated will be immediately eligible to backfill. Therefore, applicants are encouraged

to apply for any position and duty station they may be interested in, whether or not the position is listed as vacant.

The Umatilla National Forest permanent fire outreach is available at <https://go.usa.gov/xysUb>. All applicants interested in applying for a position on the Umatilla National Forest should select one of the following duty stations on their application:

- Supervisor's Office, 541-278-3716
- North Fork John Day Ranger District, 541-427-3231
- Heppner Ranger District, 541-676-9187
- Walla Walla Ranger District, 509-522-6290
- Pomeroy Ranger District, 509-843-1891

The Forest Service is an equal opportunity employer. The mission of the Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The agency manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world.

## HAPPENINGS

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the beef cattle business by selecting the best animals for their herds and marketing quality genetics for the beef cattle industry and quality beef for consumers.

### Funding available for soil health trial

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A Soil Health Demonstration Trial authorized by Section 2307(c)(7) of the 2018 Farm Bill is now underway. The trial will pay farmers for sequestering carbon in the soil. Producers are encouraged to request prompt implementation and full funding (at least \$15 million) by contacting [Leslie.Deavers@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:Leslie.Deavers@wdc.usda.gov).

### Petition aims to give farmers a fighting chance

DENVER, Colo. — According to a press release from the American Grassfed Association, since 1980, 90% of

U.S. hog farmers and 41% of U.S. cattle producers have gone out of business, and more than one million U.S. farmers have been driven off the land. Among America's poultry farmers, 71% now live below the federal poverty level. Producers are encouraged to sign a petition demanding strong safeguards that give farmers a fighting chance. For more information, visit [www.standwithfarmfamilies.org](http://www.standwithfarmfamilies.org).

### Northwest Farm Credit Services reports 2nd-quarter earnings

SPOKANE, Wash. — Northwest Farm Credit Services announced 2019 second quarter earnings of \$67.2 million compared to \$69.7 million for the same quarter of 2018. Earnings for the six months ended June 30, 2019, were \$133.3 million, compared to \$144.5 million for the same period of the prior year. The decreased earnings in 2019 are primarily due to a higher provision for credit loss expense and a smaller refund of premiums from the Farm

Credit System Insurance Corporation. Total capital increased 2.6% during the year to \$2.6 billion.

"Our financial performance at mid-year continues to be solid while we experience the increasing volatility in the ag economy," said Phil DiPofi, President and CEO. "Despite greater trade and labor challenges, our credit quality remains strong as our customers around the Northwest are generally seeing good growing conditions and positive returns."

Northwest FCS is a \$12 billion financial cooperative providing financing and related services to farmers, ranchers, agribusinesses, commercial fishermen, timber producers, rural homeowners and crop insurance customers in Montana, Idaho, Oregon, Washington and Alaska. Northwest FCS is a member of the nationwide Farm Credit System that supports agriculture and rural communities with reliable, consistent credit and financial services. For more information, go to [www.northwestfcs.com](http://www.northwestfcs.com).

## FSA

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and it appears to have paid off. He estimated that in some crops, he saved seven passes across the fields. The savings in fuel, time and equipment coupled with better soil health and water conservation were all good reasons to make the switch.

I spent a couple of hours in a combine near Helix. The field we were in had been in the Conservation Reserve Program and was now in wheat. Good moisture and timely planting had made for a good crop and the steep

ground provided no challenge for the farmer's John Deere 222 Hillside, a classic according to him.

In Hermiston, I attended the Eastern Oregon Economic Summit. There were a lot of people there, including farmers, local business owners, county commissioners, state legislators, local cities, community colleges and universities. There were a lot of great presentations showing the state of the rural

economy, stories of successful businesses with a long history, and relatively new ones in the area. There was a very interesting and informative panel of state legislators and a message from Congressman Walden.

The president of Eastern Oregon University and a representative of the state's community colleges provided an insight into the value of higher education and the roles they can play in the

work force, community at large and economic development. It was an interesting and useful event and time well spent.


These travels and visits always remind me of how important agriculture is to our communities and how progressive and productive our farmers are. I am glad that can help provide some of the tools our customers use when they need them.

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