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"Weed TV" Set to Provoke Investor Interest in Medical Marijuana

 By [Diane Bullock](#) Nov 30, 2011 2:45 pm

A new show from the Discovery Channel is expected to draw a wide audience, including those looking to cash in on pot's decriminalization.


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Following the lead of pot-driven TV offerings like Showtime's *Weeds*, *Cannabis Planet*, the oft-rerun CNBC ratings juggernaut *Marijuana Inc: Inside America's Pot Industry* and nearly every show in the Adult Swim lineup, the Discovery Channel and National Geographic are the latest networks to hitch their wagons to the Hemp Express.

A one-off documentary called *National Geographic Investigates: Marijuana Gold Rush* premieres Friday at 9 p.m. on the National Geographic Channel and will explore how a growing number of "ganjapreneurs" are blazing trails in this federally classified illegal substance.

Meanwhile, the Discovery Channel -- once devoted to endeavors in science, history,

technology, and a week here and there of sharks -- has now added *Weed Wars* to its programming slate. While CNBC presented a wide picture of the marijuana industry, dubbed the "green rush" by many, from the perspective of individual growers and law enforcement, the Discovery Channel's reality series narrows its focus on one particular medicinal dispensary. Every Thursday at 10 p.m., viewers will get a behind-the-counter look at Oakland, California's Harborside Health Center. With a client base of 94,000 patients, this facility is the largest retailer of cannabis in the world.

Those looking for a balanced argument on the legalization of marijuana will have to tune in elsewhere. *Weed Wars*, told from the point of view of Harborside's founder and executive director Steve DeAngelo, is sympathetic to the regulation, not only for the benefit of those suffering from medical ailments, but also for the potential tax boon to local economies. In fact, if the state of California instituted a \$50-per-ounce tax on recreational marijuana, the state would add about \$1.3 billion a year to its revenue rolls. (See [Why Connecticut Should Go From Decriminalizing to Legalizing Marijuana](#).)

However, when California put legalization to a vote last November, with these figures bolstering the measure, Proposition 19 went up in smoke. It's expected to return to the ballot next year.

With the legal territory of even medical marijuana in California still being a little sticky, especially since the federal government's recent promise to [crack down on dispensaries](#), *Weed Wars* promises a healthy dose of crime drama-esque suspense. "Every day you get to walk home not handcuffed is a good day," says DeAngelo in the show's promo.

The network has anticipated *Weed Wars* becoming a quick hit, already selling merchandise like logo T-shirts for \$30 and mugs for \$18 on its website before the show has even had a chance to premiere. And the show will likely appeal to a far wider and far more clear-eyed

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audience than just a pothead-based viewership looking for a break between rounds of Skyrim. Indeed, alternative investors may be drawn to the series for a closer look into this budding multibillion-dollar industry.

A number of companies in the health care and technology sectors have cashed in on the crop on various stock exchanges, with more on the way to Wall Street. Under license from the Canadian government, Amigula Inc., the world's first publicly traded marijuana company, grows and distributes cannabis for a variety of medical conditions including multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, arthritis, glaucoma, and AIDS.

Colorado Springs-based **Cannabis Science Inc.** (OBB:CBIS) trades on the **NASDAQ** as a biotech company specializing in pharmaceutical cannabis products. **General Cannabis Inc.** (OTC:CANA), a technology-based Internet marketing services company, acquired WeedMaps Media, Inc., and even took over the domain name Marijuana.com.

Former Morgan Stanley investment banker Derek Peterson had his sights set on an initial public offering before the end of the year for his indoor equipment-maker **GrowOp Technology**, which he believes will become the "Apple of hydroponic technology."

Of course, we've also seen Big Pharma get into the game with over 50 companies including **Valeant Pharmaceuticals International (VRX)**, **Pfizer (PFE)**, **Merck (MRK)**, **GlaxoSmithKline (GSK)**, **Bristol Myers-Squibb (BMY)**, **Novartis (NVS)**, and **Watson Pharmaceuticals (WPI)** receiving DEA licenses to grow cannabis and release it in generic pill form. Watson Pharmaceuticals got a head start on the market, already selling its THC pill Marinol.

Since the Delaware Senate passed Bill 17 this year that allows for a possession limit of six ounces, **16 states and Washington, DC** have now enacted laws to decriminalize pot. With the list of states growing right alongside this bustling industry, it's no longer a pipe dream to conceive marijuana as the next Internet bubble.

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