

HEMP: Crop is sensitive to moisture and frost impacts

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That raised concern among some local people that helicopters will be a regular feature of ongoing operations. According to Cyrus, that is not the case. The prospect of a longer-term need prior to harvest in mid-October led to a change in the operation.

“Given the long-term forecast for more frost, we’ve ordered some wind-generating machines,” Cyrus said.

Those machines were to be in place by last Tuesday, which Cyrus said will remove the need for a disruptive, costly aerial operation.

Cyrus told *The Nugget* that his family is raising industrial hemp on about 30 acres.

“We’re one of a few farmers in Central Oregon and one of I think 77 farmers statewide,” he said.

Industrial hemp is distinct from its relative, marijuana; by regulation it can only contain a tiny percentage of THC, the chemical compound that creates the high associated with marijuana use. Cyrus said his crop contains .3 percent THC, below the mandated limit.

“It’s regulated by the Oregon Department of Agriculture, and they evaluate the THC levels before harvest,” he said.

Hemp has myriad uses — from paper products and clothing made out of the fiber to food (hemp hearts are

featured at Costco) to use of hemp oil for industrial lubrication and skin-care products.

Industrial hemp-derived CBD oils are believed to have a range of medicinal benefits in treating chronic conditions.

In addition to having broad market potential, the crop is farmer-friendly, Cyrus notes. It uses little water. Cyrus said he is using only 10 to 20 percent as much water on his hemp acreage as he would if it was in pasture or hay. And the crop does not severely deplete the soil, allowing multiple replantings on the same fields.

“It has the potential to reinvigorate production agriculture in Central Oregon. IF, in fact, we can produce it... — Matt Cyrus

Given the extensive potential of the crop, Cyrus said, “I know dozens more farmers who are expecting to raise it next year.”

However, frost and moisture sensitivity raise question marks for the viability of the crop in Central Oregon. The Cyrus crop will be an indicator.

“It has the potential to reinvigorate production agriculture in Central Oregon,” Cyrus said. “IF, in fact, we can produce it — but at this point that’s an unknown.”

Oregon settles lawsuit for botched rollout

By Gillian Flaccus
Associated Press

PORTLAND (AP) — Oregon settled with a California software giant in a lawsuit that accused Oracle America Inc. of collecting tens of millions of dollars to create a state health care exchange website that didn’t work.

The state initially asked for more than \$6 billion in punitive damages when it filed the lawsuit in 2014 against the Redwood Shores, California company, but Oregon ultimately accepted a package that included \$35 million in cash payments and software licensing agreements and technical support with an estimated upfront worth of \$60 million.

The state paid Oracle \$240 million to create its Cover Oregon website but ultimately abandoned the site and joined the federal exchange to comply with the Affordable Care Act.

Most of the money used to pay Oracle was from federal funds designated to help states comply with the new health care law and that is likely why the settlement relies mostly on non-cash value, said David Friedman, an associate professor of law at Willamette University who has closely followed the litigation.

“The government would say, ‘Thank you for being our collection agency. We’re going to take that back,’” he said. “That’s why this is coming out as credits and things

that are a little bit to the side of the direct verdict. Oracle has probably convinced them that this is their best shot at collecting the best value.”

Six years of unlimited Oracle software and technical support included in the deal will save the state hundreds of millions of dollars in years to come and ends a bitter legal battle that has damaged Oregon’s “collective psyche,” Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum said in a statement.

“The beauty of the deal is that if we choose to take full advantage of the free (software), we are uniquely situated to modernize our statewide IT systems over the next six years — something we could not otherwise afford to do,” she said.

The cash payments include \$25 million to reimburse the state’s legal fees and a \$10 million grant to fund math, science and technology education in Oregon schools.

Oracle has insisted the website worked but former Gov. John Kitzhaber chose not to use it for political reasons.

“We are pleased to have this contentious litigation behind us and to provide Oregon with the flexibility to obtain the software and technical support it desires to address the State’s needs over the next several years,” said Dorian Daley, the company’s executive vice president and general counsel. “This is an innovative resolution to a

complex matter.”

Oregon produced the country’s worst rollout of the new national health insurance program. While the crippled website eventually worked, Oregon’s failed to enroll a single person online. The state had to resort to hiring 400 people to process paper applications.

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In March 2015, Gov. Kate Brown signed legislation dissolving Cover Oregon.

“This was going to go on and on forever and ever,” Friedman said. “A lot of people can claim victory over this.”

She can now put the messy litigation behind her as she runs for election in her own right, Friedman said. Brown inherited the governorship after her predecessor quit amid a federal investigation in February 2015. The winner of the November election will serve out the two remaining years of former Gov. John Kitzhaber’s term.

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