

Oregon fines Florida woman over park scam

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SALEM STATESMAN JOURNAL
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The state consumer protection agency is fining a Florida woman and her company \$60,000 for violating Oregon securities law, duping at least one Oregon victim into investing in an imaginary San Diego amusement park.

The Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services said Thursday it issued a cease-and-desist order against Judith Jackson, owner of Becker, Jackson and Reed.

The company "used high-pressure sales" to get more than \$1 million from people around the U.S., officials said. An Oregon victim gave \$150,000 to the company.

Becker, Jackson and Reed illegally sold shares in Alpine Family Entertainment Parks, a company supposedly developing a California amusement park.

"There were no plans to develop an amusement park," officials said. Instead, 80 percent of the money was funneled to bank accounts in Mexico and the rest was used to keep up the scam.

Officials allege Jackson is still trying to get people to invest.

Attempts by the Statesman Journal to contact Becker, Jackson and Reed by phone numbers listed on what appears to be its website were met with an automated message: "The number you have dialed is not in service."

The website claims, "Becker Jackson & Reed is a leading alternative investment manager that provides investment products to individual and institutional investors through publicly registered programs, private funds and separately managed accounts."

"With more than 30 years of experience in the alternative asset management industry, Becker Jackson & Reed and its affiliates have managed investments for more than 63,000 investors and made more than \$4.5 billion in total investments."

The website says company headquarters are in Seattle, Washington, and Orlando, Florida.

Jean Straight, acting director of the

consumer protection agency, said in a statement, "Do your homework before making investment decisions, no matter how urgent the opportunity seems."

"One of your first steps should be checking the license of any company offering investments to Oregon residents," Straight said.

Signs an investment may be too good to be true include:

- » "High rate of return, especially better than similar investments"
- » "Guarantee that investment will not fail"

» "Pressure to invest immediately"

Separately, Gov. Kate Brown on Wednesday announced a new director for the Department of Consumer and Business Services after its former head, Patrick Allen, left to become head of the Oregon Health Authority.

Cameron Smith takes the helm at the consumer protection agency after leading the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs since 2013. Smith, a former U.S. Marine Corps captain, worked as a senior policy adviser to former Govs. John Kitzhaber and Ted Kulongoski.

"Cameron is a strong leader who has spent his career focused on protecting the well-being of others," Brown said in a statement.

Smith called serving veterans and working with the other officials at the veterans' affairs department "a privilege and honor."

Replacing him at the veterans' affairs department is Sheronne Blasi, a former Salem City Council member and current Salem-Keizer School Board member.

Blasi works as the assistant director of Statewide Veteran Services at the veterans' affairs department. She worked for a decade and a half in the audits division of the Oregon Secretary of State's Office and served 14 years in the U.S. Navy.

"With her experience helping state agencies achieve on their mission and her commitment to building community partnerships, Sheronne will continue to strengthen veteran services statewide to ensure our veterans' health, education and economic opportunity," Brown said.

Blasi is poised to become the depart-

ment's first female leader.

"I am honored to continue building upon our work and the trust placed in me by Governor Brown, the (veterans' affairs department) team and the veteran community in Oregon," she said in a statement.

The governor's office says the Oregon

Senate will consider both appointments in February.

Reach staff reporter Jonathan Bach by email at jbach@statesmanjournal.com or by phone at 503-399-6714. Follow him on Twitter @JonathanMBach and Facebook at www.facebook.com/jonathanbachjournalist/.

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Blaze

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movement as Santa Ana winds swirled through the canyons. Dean said he expected the winds to change by nightfall. If they see embers travel down the mountain range and toward vacant homes, Salem Fire will alert the strike team leader.

Four helicopters hovered above the mountains, dropping water on the blazing hillside.

"All we hear is helicopters and birds," Dean said.

He doesn't like coffee, but his colleagues may sip on instant coffee or caffeinated soda through the night. On Thursday, Salem Fire will pack up their base camp at the Ventura County Fairgrounds and re-establish it in Santa Barbara roughly 27 miles away.

Keizer Fire officials couldn't share details of their tactical assignments, but

Captain Pittis said his crew is currently just south of Santa Barbara.

His team of three firefighters assisted with mopping up efforts and property assessments in Ojai along with crews from Salem Fire, Marion County Fire, Woodburn Fire and Silverton Fire.

It's the second time Keizer Fire has sent firefighters to a California fire this year, the first being a part of the Oregon response to fires in Napa and Sonoma counties. A Keizer Fire Facebook post said the crew is in good spirits and "happy to be helping where they are so badly needed."

On Monday, they assessed neighborhoods in Casitas Springs, an unincorporated area in Ventura County. Ojai and Casitas Springs are just under ten miles away from each other.

"We're a different crew than Keizer Fire sent to Napa County, but being here is where we're suppose to be," Pittis said.

Email Lauren Hernandez at lehernandez@statesmanjournal.com, call 503-399-6743 or follow on Twitter @Lauren-PorFavor

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