

Forest Service yanks \$10M PR contract

By JEFF BARNARD
Associated Press

GRANTS PASS — The U.S. Forest Service has abruptly decided not to spend \$10 million on a five-year nationwide public relations campaign to brand itself as a public agency that cares about people and nature.

The agency was planning on the campaign at a time when it's struggling to pay for fighting wildfires, maintaining trails and offering timber for sale. It has also faced a major public backlash in the West over plans to close trails and roads to motorized vehicles due to a lack of money for maintenance, as well as to prevent erosion and protect fish and wildlife.

The Forest Service issued a statement Tuesday saying that it had not accepted any contract bids and would look for other ways to enhance the public's access to national forests and understanding about what the agency does.

The agency wouldn't say why it withdrew the contract.

Andy Stahl, director of the watchdog group Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, said he thought the agency's leaders "finally listened to Forest Service employees, and no one thought this was a good idea."

Stahl said that after he learned of the contract, he sent an email to 25,000 Forest Service employees, and about half of them opened it. He got about 50 replies, all critical, suggesting the money could be



AP Photo/Ben Margot, File

This 2007 file photo shows a sign depicting U.S. Forest mascot Smokey Bear on a fire danger sign in South Lake Tahoe, Calif., as smoke from a wildfire rises behind it. The U.S. Forest Service has decided not to spend \$10 million on a nationwide public relations campaign to rebrand itself.

put to better use on recreation programs, revising forest management plans, restoring ecosystems, hiring more employees, and lifting a three-year wage freeze.

Forest Service retirees also objected. Al Matecko, retired chief of public and legislative affairs for the northwest region and head of the Old Smokies, which represents about 950 retirees, said he received 50 emails from members who were strongly opposed. He passed on those objections to Forest Service leaders, Matecko said.

"Retirees were just amazed that at this time of shrinking budgets, the Forest Service could find \$10 million," he said.

Last fall, the agency awarded a \$526,799 no-bid contract to Metropolitan Group of Port-

land, Oregon, for a branding campaign titled "Valuing People and Place" in Forest Service regions covering Oregon, Washington, southern Idaho, Utah, Wyoming and Nevada, according to the federal website FedBizOpps.gov. It was the only no-bid contract issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture out of more than 3,000.

Another federal website, USA Spending.gov, shows the Forest Service has paid Metropolitan Group \$3.6 million since 2011, much of it for the Valuing People and Place campaign.

The area covers national forests where the Forest Service has faced intense public backlash to plans to close roads and trails on national forest to motorized traffic.

Metropolitan Group's Port-

land office did not immediately return a phone message asking for comment. Its website describes the company as a "full-service social change agency that crafts and integrates strategic and creative services. We help our clients with strategic communication, multicultural engagement, organizational development and resource development to build a just and sustainable world."

The website describes the company's work for the Forest Service as helping it reflect on its roots, discover its future, and "rediscover the meaning behind (Forest Service founder) Gifford Pinchot's early direction to 'find the greatest good.'"

The website adds that Metropolitan Group was helping train Forest Service employees to deal with the public on the agency's so-called Travel Management plans, which refers to the road and trail closures.

The Forest Service filed notice Nov. 28, the day after Thanksgiving, that it was soliciting bids to expand the campaign nationwide at a cost of \$10 million over five years. Bids were to close Dec. 26, the day after Christmas.

"It's called the 'Take out the trash season,'" Stahl said. "It's when government does things it doesn't want people to know about."

Stahl sent out his email Dec. 26, and the Forest Service filed notice it was extending the bid period to Dec. 29. A week later, it announced it was not accepting any bids.

BRIEFLY

Record production in 2014 from Northwest nuclear power plant

RICHLAND, Wash. (AP) — The only nuclear power plant in the Northwest, the Columbia Generating Station at Richland, produced more electricity in 2014 than in any year in its 30-year history.

Energy Northwest says the Columbia Generating Station sent nearly 9.5 million megawatt hours of electricity to the grid, beating its previous record of 9.3 million megawatt hours in 2012.

The *Tri-City Herald* reports the plant operated at nearly 99 percent of its capacity. It ran every day in 2014.

The Columbia Generating Station has 30 years remaining in its operating life. The power is sold through the Bonneville Power Administration.

Governor defends education budget at business summit

PORTLAND (AP) — Gov. John Kitzhaber on Tuesday defended his proposed budget from critics who say it shortchanges education, telling a crowd of business officials that pouring more money into education won't improve graduation rates or student achievement.

A week before he takes the oath of office to kick off his fourth term, the Democratic governor spelled out his vision to use state funding to nudge school districts to make the education changes he seeks.

He's proposed a budget that would direct most new education money toward preschool programs. Ensuring children are ready for kindergarten and reading with their peers by third grade will keep them from falling behind when they reach high school, Kitzhaber has long said.

He also wants to change the school funding formula to reward schools that show success in certain areas, such as getting English language learners up to speed and investing in new career-focused classes.

"The money has to come from somewhere," Kitzhaber said, and pulling it out of some areas to funnel toward education may have a detrimental impact on children.

"The money we're spending on housing, the money we're spending on mental health, the money we're spending on stabilizing families has a huge impact on the ability of these young kids to succeed," Kitzhaber told the executives, lawmakers and lobbyists gathered at the annual Oregon Business Summit in Portland.

Some school advocates have said the governor's proposed budget wouldn't provide enough money to reduce class sizes or provide training for teachers.

Oregon agriculture officials drafting hemp farming rules

SALEM (AP) — As Oregon gets ready for legal recreational pot at mid-year, some farmers are eager to put in their first crops of hemp, the marijuana cousin that won't get you high.

State agriculture officials are drafting rules that would allow growers to produce industrial hemp this spring, *The Oregonian* reports.

Hemp is a strain of the plant that doesn't contain much of the psychoactive chemical in recreational or medical marijuana, and its advocates tout it for a variety of uses.

"It could save America," said Jerry Norton, a hemp activist from Salem. "I am

talking about everything from biodiesel fuel to food to health care products to paper. It's endless. There are thousands of applications."

He has begun lining up equipment and land, but he's not sure yet how large an operation he'll have, Norton said.

Some of the regulations under discussion have made hemp proponents unhappy, such as the \$1,500 license for three years.

Courtney Moran, an attorney with expertise in hemp production, called that "a huge problem," but she said some producers will move forward anyway.

"I know lots of people ready to go," she said. "They want to plant this summer."

There are also objections to a minimum-acreage requirement of 2.5 acres and the stipulation that seeds be used to cultivate a crop, not produced for such uses as dietary supplements and hemp oil, a food ingredient.

Eighteen states, including Oregon, have laws defining industrial hemp as distinct from marijuana and have removed barriers to its production, said Lauren Stansbury, a spokeswoman for the Hemp Industries Association. Only three states — Colorado, Kentucky

and Vermont — planted crops this year.

In 2009, the Oregon Legislature approved industrial hemp production, but officials moved slowly at first until it became apparent the crop wouldn't run afoul of federal law enforcement.

Democratic Sen. Floyd Prozanski of Eugene, a proponent of industrial hemp, said the state's law and the rules that will guide the new industry may need to be tweaked, but they're a good first step. "I am in strong support of us moving forward and getting the rules of the current statute in place," he said.

Corrections

An article in Tuesday's *East Oregonian* incorrectly stated when full operations will resume at the Williams Northwest Pipeline LNG plant in Plymouth, Washington. Full operations will resume at the plant by November 2015. The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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AccuWeather.com Forecast

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Mainly cloudy	Partly sunny and chilly	Mostly cloudy	Mostly cloudy	Times of clouds and sun

PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST			
42°	28°	37°	28°
37°	29°	39°	29°
39°	29°	39°	31°

HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST			
43°	30°	40°	30°
39°	29°	40°	29°
40°	29°	40°	28°

ALMANAC

PENDLETON

through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	51°	36°
Normals	40°	26°
Records	70° (1914)	-6° (1942)

PRECIPITATION	24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	0.18"	
Normal month to date	0.35"	
Year to date	0.18"	
Last year to date	0.02"	
Normal year to date	0.35"	

HERMISTON

through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	49°	36°
Normals	40°	28°
Records	58° (2009)	-8° (1974)

PRECIPITATION	24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	0.10"	
Normal month to date	0.24"	
Year to date	0.10"	
Last year to date	0.02"	
Normal year to date	0.24"	

SUN AND MOON

	Last	New	First	Full
	Jan 13	Jan 20	Jan 26	Feb 3

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.

REGIONAL FORECAST

Region	Forecast
Coastal Oregon	Partial sunshine today; pleasant in the south. Patchy clouds tonight.
Eastern and Central Oregon	Sunshine today, except mostly cloudy across the north; fog in the upper Treasure Valley.
Western Washington	Partly sunny today; areas of fog in the morning. Areas of fog late tonight.
Eastern Washington	Mainly cloudy today; a bit of freezing drizzle in the north during the morning.
Cascades	Partly sunny today. Patchy clouds tonight. Partly sunny tomorrow.
Northern California	Partly sunny today. Partly cloudy tonight. Times of clouds and sun tomorrow.

REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Thu.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	56	40	pc	57	41	pc
Baker City	41	22	pc	38	24	pc
Bend	51	29	s	47	30	pc
Brookings	63	46	pc	59	46	pc
Burns	42	18	s	40	18	pc
Enterprise	43	25	pc	42	24	pc
Eugene	51	35	pc	53	35	pc
Heppner	44	29	pc	39	28	pc
Hermiston	43	30	c	40	30	pc
John Day	51	22	s	48	27	pc
Klamath Falls	55	28	s	54	29	pc
La Grande	48	24	pc	45	26	pc
Meacham	46	24	pc	42	25	pc
Medford	57	32	pc	58	38	pc
Newport	59	45	pc	59	45	pc
North Bend	61	43	pc	60	45	pc
Ontario	38	26	pc	36	28	pc
Pasco	44	29	c	41	30	pc
Pendleton	42	28	c	37	28	pc
Portland	52	34	pc	52	36	pc
Redmond	52	25	s	47	26	pc
Salem	52	34	pc	53	34	pc
Spokane	37	25	c	36	22	pc
Ukiah	48	29	pc	46	28	pc
Vancouver	51	31	pc	52	35	pc
Walla Walla	42	32	c	39	31	pc
Yakima	47	28	c	44	31	pc

WORLD CITIES

	Today			Thu.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	40	19	pc	46	21	s
Hong Kong	69	57	r	68	57	s
Jerusalem	41	35	sn	42	35	sh
London	49	47	c	50	42	r
Mexico City	67	44	pc	62	41	pc
Moscow	5	2	l	15	13	c
Paris	43	39	pc	51	41	r
Rome	56	43	sh	57	45	c
Seoul	28	14	pc	31	19	s
Sydney	83	69	pc	84	70	s
Tokyo	48	37	pc	48	35	pc

WINDS

(in mph)	Today	Thursday
Boardman	VAR 2-4	NNE 3-6
Pendleton	N 3-6	NNW 3-6

UV INDEX TODAY

0 0 1 0 0 0

8 a.m. 10 a.m. Noon 2 p.m. 4 p.m. 6 p.m.

0-2, Low 3-5, Moderate 6-7, High; 8-10, Very High; 11+, Extreme

The higher the AccuWeather.com UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.

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NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

National Summary: Cold air will extend over much of the eastern two-thirds of the nation today. Bands of heavy snow are forecast downwind of the Great Lakes. Most areas west of the Rockies will be dry, sunny and warm.

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 87° in Fullerton, Calif. Low -23° in Black River Falls, Wis.

NATIONAL CITIES

	Today			Thur.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Albuquerque	42	24	sn	46	27	pc
Atlanta	37	15	pc	31	23	s
Atlantic City	32	15	pc	26	21	s
Baltimore	29	11	pc	24	18	s
Billings	30	26	pc	27	-7	sn
Birmingham	35	12	pc	30	21	s
Boise	38	29	pc	37	29	pc
Boston	30	0	sf	21	9	s
Charleston, SC	53	18	pc	37	22	s
Charleston, WV	20	8	sf	22	21	pc
Chicago	2	-11	pc	12	0	sf
Cleveland	14	4	sn	15	10	c
Dallas	36	18	pc	40	30	s
Denver	30	24	sn	44	14	s
Detroit	12	3	sf	10	6	sn
El Paso	52	29	pc	50	35	pc
Fairbanks	-1	-15	s	15	10	pc
Fargo	2	-4	s	12	-9	sf
Honolulu	77	62	s	79	64	s
Houston	53	29	pc	43	35	pc
Indianapolis	5	-9	pc	14	8	pc
Jacksonville	61	26	pc	46	32	sh
Kansas City	7	-4	s	26	6	c
Las Vegas	66	41	pc	65	41	pc