

Government agencies paid \$250,000 of taxpayer money for custom-made mascots,ⁱ including:



Costumed Mascot: The Green Reaper

Agency/Program: Department of Energy

National Security Technologies Energy Program

Additional Notes: Modeled after the Grim Reaper but holding a flower instead of a scythe, the Green Reaper visits elementary school children to encourage energy conservation.ⁱⁱ The costume includes a built-in fan, which ironically requires the use of energy.



Costumed Mascot: Sammy Soil
Agency/Program: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service



Costumed Mascots: Thermie and BAC
Agency/Program: U.S. Department of the Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspections Service



Costumed Mascots: Milkshake the Cow
Agency/Program: U.S. Department of the Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service



Costumed Mascot: Power Panther
Agency/Program: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service



Costumed Mascot: Brite the Light Bulb
Agency/Program: Department of Defense
U.S. Navy Installation Command's Shore Energy program
Additional Notes: The giant, florescent-yellow character with bright-blue pants promotes energy conservation.ⁱⁱⁱ



Costumed Mascot: Franklin the Fair Housing Fox

Agency/Program: Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity

Additional Notes: A HUD official explained, “our hope is that this mascot will lead to greater housing opportunities for all.”^{iv}



Costumed Mascot: *Major Muskrat*

Agency/Program: Department of Interior
National Park Service

River Raisin National Battlefield Park

Additional Notes: Major Muskrat was created to increase awareness of the existence of the River Raisin National Battlefield Park in Michigan, which was established in 2010. The park commemorates the site of the greatest American defeat during the War of 1812. “No one wanted to talk about it,” admits an interpretative ranger at the park. When questioned by officials at larger parks why River Raisin merits its own mascot, the ranger replies, “We’re so small, that’s why we need a mascot!”^{vi}

“The life-sized character is played by a person inside the costume that cannot talk and has limited vision,” according to the National Park Service. “The Major is accompanied by two to three other people who are in uniform or costume. One person acts as the Major’s handler and is responsible for ensuring the Major does not fall, is not pulled over by children, is aware of what is going on around him, is positioned well for photos, and can safely move from one point to another.”^{vi}



Costumed Mascot: G. Lupe Ringtail
Agency/Program: Department of Interior
National Park Service

Additional Notes: Guadalupe Mountains and Carlsbad Caverns National Park
Lupe is a ringtail, which is a raccoon-like mammal found throughout the desert southwest. Some park “visitors want to pull Lupe’s inflatable tail, and the occasional baby will cry at the sight of the six-foot mascot.”^{vii}



Costumed Mascot: Sunny Saguaro
Agency/Program: Department of Interior
National Park Service
Saguaro National Park

Additional Notes: Sunny attends parades and festivals, but the Park’s community engagement coordinator notes, the costume’s “range of walking is very limited.”^{viii}



Mascot: Riley the Roadrunner
Agency/Program: Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Manhattan Project National Historical Park
Additional Notes: Because it gets hot inside the costume, Riley is fitted with a built-in fan and an ice vest can also be worn underneath.^{ix}



Costumed Mascot: Puddles the Blue Goose
Agency/Program: Department of Interior
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Costumed Mascot: Rex the Ready Lion
Agency/Program: Department of Homeland Security
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)



Costumed Mascots: Eli and Layla the Mighty Minters
Agency/Program: U.S. Department of Treasury
U.S. Mint



Costumed Mascots: Owlle Skywarn and Sanctuary Sam
Agency/Program: U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

ⁱ Various agencies have spent a total of \$250,853 on contracts with Costume Specialists, Inc. since Fiscal Year 2018, including costs for costume maintenance, [USAspending.gov](https://www.usaspending.gov), accessed October 2, 2019; <https://www.usaspending.gov/#/recipient/48b31733-f33b-4e4b-5d76-9689e51d1c0e-C>.

Keyword Search

Search Summary | Total Prime Award Amount: \$250,853 Prime Award Transaction Count: 39

- ⁱⁱ Emma Best, “Don’t fear the Green Reaper: The story of the Department of Energy’s dubious mascot,” Muckrock, January 23, 2019; <https://www.muckrock.com/news/archives/2019/jan/23/etid-green-reaper/>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Brite Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/pg/navybrite/about/?ref=page_internal, accessed October 2018.
- ^{iv} “HUD’S OFFICE OF FAIR HOUSING AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY INTRODUCES, ‘FRANKLIN, THE FAIR HOUSING FOX,’” U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development press release, April 10, 2007; <https://archives.hud.gov/news/2007/pr07-040.cfm>.
- ^v Nicolas Brulliard, “The Rise of the National Park Mascots,” National Parks Conservation Association, February 28, 2018; <https://www.npca.org/articles/1758-the-rise-of-the-national-park-mascots>.
- ^{vi} “River Raisin National Battlefield Park Long-Range Interpretive Plan,” U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, July 2015; <http://npshistory.com/publications/rira/lrip-2015.pdf>.
- ^{vii} Nicolas Brulliard, “The Rise of the National Park Mascots,” National Parks Conservation Association, February 28, 2018; <https://www.npca.org/articles/1758-the-rise-of-the-national-park-mascots>.
- ^{viii} Nicolas Brulliard, “The Rise of the National Park Mascots,” National Parks Conservation Association, February 28, 2018; <https://www.npca.org/articles/1758-the-rise-of-the-national-park-mascots>.
- ^{ix} Nicolas Brulliard, “The Rise of the National Park Mascots,” National Parks Conservation Association, February 28, 2018; <https://www.npca.org/articles/1758-the-rise-of-the-national-park-mascots> .