

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #256 - Sides A/B/C/D

Subject: Water Meeting 1977

Place:

Date: March 25, 1977

Interviewer:

(Much of the conversation was too far from the microphone to be picked up.)

DALE WHITE: ... so the problems that we are experiencing is the lack of water, and ... task force ... going around the state with the presentation ... Tonight we're fortunate to have Chris Wheeler of the state water resources and is here tonight, and he'll be the one that is principal in presenting this. So Chris, I'll turn the meeting over to you.

CHRIS WHEELER: Thank you. I don't know if I'm going to be principal here or not, but at least I'll start it off and cover some of the general parts of the topic and ... in the state. And I'll have some ... slides here ... And after that, why Bill ... the water master here in the area will take over and cover some of the more specific local stuff. We'll answer questions after that. Well, as you probably know, nobody needs to tell you, you have a very dry and critical situation on water supply this year. And the purpose of these meetings are to give a little bit of the background ... information about what is going on and what the supplies are, and cover some of the things that are taking place, and hear any suggestions or information or input that you might have to guide an action to be taken.

The department of course, as you know, this is a regular ... with water. Being the principal water ... threat. And tonight we'll cover a little bit of what the situation is in the region ... etc. And the possibility ... that you may have along ...

When we talk about the regional water, the situation we're talking about the Pacific Northwest, the Columbia Basin. And it's pretty much like the State of Oregon, and it doesn't ... across the United States. It's also pretty true all over the Western United States. If ... 88 percent of the water use is for power, the mainstream use is essentially power. And in the Columbia Basin, the regional power picture, those are the two uses that are predominant, that are going to create the conflicts one ... the other.

The irrigation portion is relatively minor, even though there are major withdrawals along the Columbia River, and ... a big circle by Boardman ... going out there actually ... about 20 per-cent ... Real quickly, if I don't turn the slide around in the wrong direction.

Idaho ... input from 0 to 35 percent of normal. And Montana, 31 to 47 percent, and Washington, 10 to 20, and Oregon 10 to 35, and British Columbia ... the decent part of the Columbia Basin is about 50 percent. ... is considered decent.

Currently we are forecasting that the Columbia will be at an all time low. The record low runoff ... We, the fifteen year average ... on the April to September runoff ... million acre-feet. In '73, as many of you remember was a pretty dry year here. It was only 8 percent of normal ... normal precip on 59 percent, it was pretty normal. Currently we're forecasting at 53 ...

Some of you have heard that we have had a lot of rain in Western Oregon. As of about the first week in February, and we have had quite a bit. We have to ... when we talk about the dry situations that the state is in. We have the rain ... in the coastal basin, the coastal range, part of the Cascades that runs into the Willamette and flows in toward the west. We have the Cascade portion which is snow packed, the higher rate streams, and you have Eastern Oregon ... snow packed ... If you didn't have ... 30 to 40 percent of your snow in by the first of the year, you're going to have trouble. Because after that, you simply cannot get any snow pack.

As of the first of March, as you can see the rain fed streams in the ... at that particular time. ... we don't have the filters on here.

The Silvies runs about 40 percent ... The state as a whole, and ... and replacing more before the year is out. And sometimes it's a little hard for the layperson to catch it and understand all the ... because the predominance of hydro power that we rely on in the northwest, about 85 percent of the total ... is hydro, and 15 percent from co-generation of one kind or another. And that hydro is primarily a historic system through the winter, and high flow in the summer. Ultimately, with all of the facilities in ... projects and all the ... in, you will have almost a totally controlled river.

But they plan on not living by the day. There is right now ... hydropower has been shut off. There is plenty of water in storage; it will provide all we need. ... About then we start to run short.

So what they do is run on 45 month predicted critical water year series, and figure out so that they can have that series of dry spell continue before they run completely out. Fortunately we did start with a good year last year, so we were pretty well up on the storage at that time. It is also one of the reasons that the areas of Eastern Oregon that have large reservoirs are going to get by in --- not a good fashion, but have some acceptable fashion this year, while the basin such as the Silvies is not running ... From the ... you can see that throughout the state that we have ... And in the Willamette Valley ... we had up to normal ... I think 75 percent up to normal. Those figures are all percentages ... You get over to the Silvies and you go ...

What does this mean? In the State of Oregon it means a lot of things. Obviously rainwater is the --- about as critical a situation as you can get. But parts of Western Oregon ... what happens in the spring ... with very little effect. ... And this is an area where conservation ... They solve them, and there have been forecasts and studies, a

number of steps have been taken to conserve water supplies in the municipalities throughout the state. Including the pricing situations have drastically increased on the use, so ... conservation advertising and plans and what can be done to try to save water.

There is a concern, although we have been getting better since the third week in January, in the Willamette Valley because of the --- not really a water supply to operate the industry, but the other end of the stick. The discharge of the ... of the industry, and the requirements for --- there is a water for the ... so it can be dumped in. A very real concern on the fishery impact on those streams and whether or not they would be able to continue to operate from that standpoint ... water supply.

And of course agriculture ... to, to total loss of crops and ... And of course we have the possibilities of potential, of very major fire season, and extreme fire danger because of the --- throughout the winter and through September we have had very little precip. The decayed wood, the debris underneath is ... and therefore much more flammable, even though the humidity might be down ... shower condition ... condition there. ... are going to be affected by low flows. No one knows exactly how much, there are a number of steps being taken. You may have read in the paper or heard on TV the announcement here a couple weeks ago when the three governors, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon at the regional commission decided that they would ask the Corp to make a dump of about three and two thirds million acre feet out of storage in the Columbia ... water to get the upstream ... up the river.

So in case the --- right now, Idaho, Idaho Power Company are more critical than the rest of the northwest, and we're down on ... supply and facing mandatory curtailment of some of their ... Our contracts, the ... next month.

Right now they're trying to get an amendment to the license for Brown Lake, dealing with the rate of flow ... or change of flow, and the normal flow is the outflow from

there so that we can try to get ... refilled. With that ... and real lucky ... first of July, and then they will be drafting it through the summer ... The present concern is the ... special consideration ... on that, and I hope that ... work out by the first of the month.

The situation where everybody has to suffer a little bit, and in actuality the fishery condition will be much better off later in the summer, if Brown Lake ... is filled. Every drop of water they get in there is that much better ... with the additional head and the storage that we'll have ...

The ... are made for navigational concerns rather than fishery, but there have been changes in public priorities of concern from the navigation to the fisheries, as time has gone by. We don't know for sure that the water between ... will be from the timber industry to the people who will perhaps be out of the woods if it does stay dry this summer. But they worry that they had a good winter, and they cut like heck ... during the winter, which partly offset it.

The drought management plan that has been considered or worked on is deemed ... and assessing the impacts ... use the options, and these varied with each of the areas. You can't make it uniform throughout the State of Oregon, little own throughout the region. Each is a place with a different situation. And how that's best handled has to be considered on that basis. You ... where you don't have any storage facilities to speak of ... I feel the ... for example where the original ones are about 25 percent of capacity. And a little bit of the water down the river ... I think it could be diverted out for irrigation ... if it can. And likewise, in the elaborate system where ... to get that started.

Likewise here I think that the agricultural standpoint, the major impact is going to be the ... pasture production ... We're also going to be ... there is going on right now some severe problems in the stock pond, because the ... literally didn't fill and with the amount of precip some of the springs probably will go drier than they did before.

However, we have to make some adjustments to take the water out ... that you are really facing a critical municipal situation here, and I said that could change here. Early in the program the coastal area, I look to be most critical on the list of supplies and --- while we've gotten precip there ... There have of course been some drought programs proposed at the state level. There is a bill introduced concerning the ... which has not yet passed ... add to the precip ... And we do recognize that this late in the year ... somewhat of a gamble. It is not, not put on like you would say, if you had all your druthers ... a full season of operation.

Also the number of steps being taken with additional work done in forecasting, in trying to help farmers know what the supply is going to be, and it would cover the use of it and to make sure that the people get what they're entitled to. There is not going to be any change in the water laws or the water rate system, and is a practical matter we couldn't do. Actually our water law system ... is set up on the basis of shortage. So that's what they had back in the 1900's to 1909 when the law was passed, that's what it was set. Right now some of you on the Silvies, 1883 is the latest ... right now, and that ... the best we can get out of it. And so with the developments with that ... shortage. And it does provide ... procedure whereby those who are entitled to, do get the water, and those before the rights; it's a bad deal. And there isn't enough. If you try to spread it to everybody ... and share and share alike, it just wouldn't work, because nobody would get enough to do any good out of it.

However, there will be, and there is going on a lot of emphasis to make sure that nobody wastes it. There is a real concern throughout the state that the water is not wasted, and cover a lot farther than it does on a good water year.

Now I think I've probably already covered most of the items on that side, so read it quick and I'll pass on by. ... is not much of a concern here, because it gets talked about a

lot, total amount used is, is relatively minor related to irrigation. As I said irrigation takes about 80 --- anywhere from 85 to 90 percent of the total consumptive use of water in the state. And when you're talking about it as a consumption, why that is a major picture.

As far as the other uses are concerned the picture of the power may well be consumptive to downstream use, but it is not necessarily ... not to here. The eastern part of the state of Oregon has an average daily use of about 650 gallons per customer. The valley area is about 500 gallons per day, and coastal areas 360, while the United States national average is 160. We do use quite a bit more. There are some reasons for it, we aren't always wasteful, because by in large all of our municipal systems has a good quality of water. The better quality the water is, the more people use. We have larger areas of irrigation ... in many of the eastern areas, other parts of the United States, and we also have one of general ... food processing industries and high water usage industries in the cities. So there is some other aspect of it, but if you don't have a meter system well you can cut the water use by at least a third with the meters.

Irrigation and fishing season again, it depends on what part of the state. If the systems that we generally do have here, there is --- it's difficult to do a good job. But you can watch it. You can watch your soil moisture, and once you have saturated it to its capacity, the rest of the water you put on doesn't do anybody any good. And the parts of the area here uses sprinklers, and that is a very critical area where you can save yourself both money or power for pumping it, as well as water by closely watching soil moisture in the field, and making sure that you're not running it through the ...

We will expect that the ground water supply throughout the state that there is going to be too much of a significant problem. Here the effect is not going to be this year ... be several years, and then of course the ground water supply has suffered more from it. In the valley area, we have a shallow ... up to 40 feet deep in town. ... we ... every year and

ordinarily it runs on a water table in the wintertime from about 4 feet below land surface to the end of the summer to about 20 feet when it's drawn down. And we do have a lot of fairly shallow wells with pump systems that we have had trouble through the winter because they did not recharge. They have been ... recharge and they're still about 7 feet below the average there and they will continue to have a problem.

... shows that the major part of your household use, if you knock off 30 percent by being a little bit more careful ... use. As the saying goes, shower with a friend. If you can find the right one ... (Laughter)

The last slide that I'm going to show you here is just run back through some of the things that I have covered. Basically for the state as a whole as of April 1st. And ... from 10 percent up to full supply in the state, and generally cover the ... in Eastern Oregon, except where there is a large reservoir with major holdings. ... Obviously some of the ... and a lot of those ... We do expect it to impact all walks of life. The agricultural, the environmental, your individual enjoyment, and the employment picture ... the fish and wildlife people, and just about anything else that you want to think about. If they close the forests so you can't go in because of the fire danger ... right there. And throughout the ... picture.

My mother still lives up in the northeastern part of the state. I was up visiting her the other day ... and it's about 10 percent on Walla Walla east of Umatilla at that particular time. And she knew ... that she keep ... she did remind me that she had over fifty years of farming in that valley, and had some of the years when it snowed so bad, and it rained an awful lot in the summertime. We can do our praying, we can do our rain dances ... all the way through and ... We do forget rather quickly sometimes, when actually ... just before the dry spell started, we had record-breaking rains throughout most of the state. So weather patterns can change pretty quickly, and we really don't expect them to at this

time. The best forecast that we can give is that ... on those very, very severe conditions.

Well Judge, I think that I've talked long enough ... turn it over to Bill now who does a little better ... here on the basin, and then if you happen to have any questions we'll catch it. Bill ---

BILL (?): Well ... out this week measuring streams around the area ... Malheur River to Drewsey ... runoff of 665 ... feet per second. ... Silvies River, I have ... runoff of 762 ... feet per second. Today we had 36. Trout Creek, we usually have ... and we was down there last Friday, and we had ... That isn't enough to push the water out. As Chris was saying, the Silvies River here which supplies some of the water ... at ... they are using this water for 85, and 86, we're shutting off ... and sending water on down ... check some of the dams and ... and finding a little yellow tag on them ... shut the gate off. ... Silver Creek to Riley ... put up a ... we had 9 feet or ... Donner and Blitzen near Frenchglen we usually have 214, we had 52. ... We're really concerned about the wells in the area. I measured the wells of the network that we have set up here last week. One I didn't get yet and --- Mrs. Arntz's well that's out here, that belongs to Paul Friedrichsen now, a year ago ... at 53 and in '72, it was 54, so ... surface to the water. So it came up with ... It drained within a foot out here in that area, that's just north of town. There's ... clear out east of town here about four miles, we ... it last week, and it's ten foot to the water. In 1971, it was seven feet to the water. ... some have increased, some of them decreased under ... So I see no problem in the wells at this time, we check these every three months. ... We'll have problems with the rivers and creeks, there is no way to get around that ... There is a little bit of snow up around Silvies, Seneca. If we had a good rain, why we'd probably ... have something to irrigate with maybe one time. ...

Water, with the few wells around that have been drilled and had the water rights ---

SIDE B

BILL: ... Also on the streams, people irrigating from them ... runs off ... apply for that water right ... I've seen some wells ... those in the area, and a lot of them, there's a waste there. Most of them don't have a valve on them to shut them off, to control this water as it comes out ... Some of the models, is supposed to have a valve on them, be able to control and shut them off ... In a year like this where you have several good artisan wells running ... same as having somebody run your pump ...

There's a lot of wells that need drilled, there's a specification for each of these wells. If you don't know what they are when you're going to drill them, then you can come into the office and I'll explain it to you and give you a pamphlet showing you how to develop and drill.

There's a lot of fellows drilling their own wells ... same procedures that licensed drillers use. ... if you drill a well for your neighbor in ... drill ... You got somebody to drill a well on your land and he hasn't been licensed ... turn your well on ... falsify records ...

There's one or two that are just going out here and drilling a hole in the ground and putting a piece of pipe in the ... In the long end ... Most of the well drillers are supposed to sample the water ... seal it off.

... (Speaker too far from microphone, can't understand enough of what he is saying.)

DALE WHITE: Any questions of Bill or Chris?

MAN 1: Yes. I heard that you could only use one flow of water when you're drilling a well, but what you said there didn't sound like it if you had it cleaned. Good water, why you didn't sound like you had to case off these other flows.

BILL: ... there is no problem. ... flows of water, you get a ... below that. If you have one cased off, or sealed off ... or clay, concrete, nothing to stop that water from ...

MAN 1: You can't have more than one flow of ... in the well if it's ... water.

BILL: That's right.

CHRIS WHEELER: Bill, the question I know that has come up in some other places, that's been ... out of context by some people who have an axe to grind. The gentleman's question deals with --- where we have a substantial head difference. High head artisan well, a zone, and another zone in the shower ... or at least in some other level with a substantially different head. And in those cases, and in order to prevent the waste of water, yes it must be cased and separated, and there is no way of developing both of those kinds of zones through the one pump without ... And that is correct and in those circumstances, you can't.

On the other hand where you have a series of basalt flows with essentially the same head so that there isn't a loss of water from one zone to the other, and the waste of it, and it is also a good quality ... quality of water, than more than one zone, or one layer can be developed from the same well. It depends on what the fact or situation is.

All of these rules and laws and permits are made to protect the resource and the people, and those who are trying to make it develop. It should be obvious to all of us I think, when a year like this, that the water is our most precious resource. And you can't get --- substitute any ... or sympathize with you.

MAN 1: Then all areas of the state wouldn't necessarily apply then, according to that, would it? I'm talking about ---

CHRIS WHEELER: The same rules apply ---

MAN 1: Yeah, the same rules, but ---

CHRIS WHEELER: ... but the facts with conditions, you get down there under the ground is vastly different throughout the state.

MAN 1: I'm talking about a place between Lakeview and Klamath Falls, a fellow told me

that ---

CHRIS WHEELER: That's correct, and in Lakeview and Klamath Falls

MAN 1: Well, between there.

CHRIS WHEELER: You have a thousand foot head difference in some of the zones, that one of the well drillers wanted to put together. And if you want to think about that for a minute, that's just like taking a big pipe and running a thousand feet up the mountain and put the water supply in, and where is it going to go? And if you don't believe it, go out and fill your garden hose and hold one end up and see if it runs out any. Well that is correct, and there is a maximum loss of water involved if you do not properly case and separate those kinds of ...

Klamath Falls area is particularly indicative of a problem on this and ... using it for heating and ...

MAN 1: Now the fellow that was telling it was drilling a well in Bly. You might be acquainted with him because he has a case before the, Chris in Salem. This is the reason I was asking the question, because I ---

CHRIS WHEELER: Well, the rules are the same throughout the state, but the actual condition of the ground water supply is vastly different, and they have to be applied to make sense with that practical condition.

DALE WHITE: Okay, well thanks Jack. We'll probably answer, or pose some other questions on this. I think ... representatives deals mostly with the state departments and federal ones here. Some of you may have prepared some statements that you wish to make ...

Is there anyone here that has some, Forest Service, BLM, or State Forestry, or the various state agencies that has prepared a statement that they would like to come up at

his time?

I'm Al (?) ... State Forestry in John Day.

DALE WHITE: Okay.

AL: And --- we don't have no prepared statement, but we would like to bring in what the State Forestry is doing all over ... Grant County. As of the first of April, we will have fourteen ... a federally funded program. And for the first time ... we're organizing streams, and the streams over the entire ... You get to the point where the state can't handle them, and they have too many fires ... We said at one time, that we would probably close the woods. Our organization don't want to close the woods, unless it comes right down to it. If we close all of them out, we have no one to supply our ... We will, the state will ... we will ask the operators, industry, and people to do hoot-owls. And a certain ... But again, we hope that we don't have to do this, we hope that ... like we did last summer, everybody can ...

DALE WHITE: Thanks Al. How about ... from Burns, do you have any present plans regarding the forestry as far as timber harvest or grazing that you'd like to make known at this time?

DON (?): ... prepared a special request for additional mining ... privileges, based on ... more rainfall than normal, about the same ... so that mining may be done. They're looking at examining the grazing situations and it looks like there will be some reduction in grazing opportunities on the forest. We're looking at the ... grass pastures there, where we can, that are available ... In some cases we'll be looking at coming off the forest early.

Timber, we don't really know, we could have a real serious problem there from insects, ... and we also put in ... that's something you can't always predict. Like Chris said earlier, the timber industry is not really ... log pretty much all winter. ... We did have

a pretty serious bark beetle problem last summer. And so the potential ... this summer ...

DALE WHITE: Thank you Don. ...

MAN 2: Not a great deal Dale, there is a possibility that we could have some problems with road construction this summer ... Like Don said this winter, the loggers are taking out a lot of these beetle infested trees that we have, and they're still going at it, at a period in time that they would normally be shut down. Get this beetle infested timber out of the woods before, before the weather warms up, and the beetles fly, and get into the trees ... get them out of the woods and into ...

Our position remains about like Snow Mountain ...

DALE WHITE: BLM?

MAN 3: We've contacted all of our users ... lot by lot basis. We have a shortage of ... water. Some of the ranchers are ... and hauling water now. We have tanks in the yard --- tanks that can ... some of the ranchers. We are planning on licensing as usual. If it gets bad, why we'll cut it off and ... the grazing fees.

BILL PHILLIPS: ... lot by allotment, and at this point in time, you can't help but be a little pessimistic, I mean unless ... a little optimistic ... Unless things change, there is no way we're going to have a normal amount of grass, and ... right now we're short of water in the reservoirs. We don't have water in but ... fifteen or twenty reservoirs at the present time. ... even if it does ... grass, and it won't be utilized probably even if it's there. ... herding cows to an area that hasn't been used ... It just varies from allotment to allotment. It's kind of a tough situation.

DALE WHITE: Thank you Bill. Joe, has the Refuge got anything?

JOE MAZZONI: ... have a pretty definite reading as to what our situation is going to be, particularly ... production. ... A lot depends on what kind of rainfall we have between now and our ... production season. But as several people have pointed out, we're not too

optimistic. ... survey the first of April ...

DALE WHITE: Okay, I think that's probably most of the ... Fred.

I'm FRED RINGER from the ASCS. And I have a number of items in the newspaper on this drought, and there's --- the county ASCS committees in a number of counties has taken some action that they hope will help their local ranchers. One thing is that under the ACP program, Agriculture Conservation Program, they have increased the cost share from 50 percent to 75 percent on development facilities for livestock water. Under that practice, we see a lot of pressure on ranges, we see a lot of distribution problems, where the livestock is going to really abuse that range. If we had proper water locations, some of these things might be alleviated. Also Malheur, Harney, Lake, Klamath counties have went together and submitted a request into Washington, D. C. for hauling water for livestock. We see this maybe as one of the main practices right now that would be of the best benefit either on a public or private lands. There is some grass out there, but without that water, you can't utilize it. We do not know where that is right now. It's within Washington, but if it will be acted on, or when it will be acted on, is --- we have no way of knowing.

There has been a number of inquiries into the disaster emergency programs that we administer. They are not --- none of these programs are active now. It takes a declaration of the governor, and then it takes a declaration of the president for any of these programs to be activated. There are some areas that are --- have been declared, and these programs are in effect. You have probably all heard the news, and seen it in the news of California's situation. I believe some --- maybe some counties ... might be declared, but that hasn't been confirmed yet. If this was declared, then there are a number of things that might be implemented. But it's hard to say. One thing would be the emergency livestock feed program. This is not a commodity program

like we had in '73, '74. Because all of the commodity credit corporations stops within --- used up.

So in essence what it is, it's a reimbursement type of cost share program, whereby the rancher would go out and purchase his own feed, and then he would be reimbursed for part of that. In conjunction with --- he would not be eligible to participate in both programs.

There is a ... booklet, possibly that would be implemented. And he would receive the transportation costs on a cost share basis ... And then possibly a livestock transportation ... program also. So these are three or four things that could be implemented in this county if it is --- if there was a declaration made. In talking to, or the other counties, the most critical problem is the water situation right now. There is no way around it, except maybe we can haul water, and this is the intent, this practice.

I want to emphasize again though, that none of these programs are activated now, except the practice SD5 which has been increased ... and that practice you can develop seeps and springs, drill wells, put in lines and tanks, in a permanent type basis. Those were only eligible on private land, and not public. So those were --- you know, you moving out on allotments April 1st or thereabouts. Nothing on this, anything to do with the ASCS can do right now on public lands.

DALE WHITE: ... Richard, do you know what the governors stance is on this ... disaster area? ...

RICHARD ? : ... 500 per acre.

MAN: Well actually the federal disaster relief programs are not well situated to the drought. Because they are all based on some-thing after the effect has occurred. And a drought is something that you're faced with today, and a disaster, you know it's occurring in the next two or three, four months. And under the ... very little to do with it. The

governor couldn't declare a disaster at this time, because of ... But he does --- the steps are being taken, the beginning work so that if ... as soon as it would be effective. Why the governor is considering ... at that time. He did declare a state of critical concern which permitted some of the unusual phases, and it provides for the ... ultimately consider a disaster ... at that time.

DALE WHITE: Is he going to evaluate that on a county by county

...

MAN: ... is going to be considered on the basis of county needs. There is before the federal congress a bill now for eight hundred and fifty billion that is directly related to ... drought assistance. If it gets passed, we'll have some more applications that will not be required ... same steps. It was only introduced a few days ago, and while they expect a fairly fast action on it

...

DALE WHITE: Bob, does Squaw Butte have any suggestions or you got the same problem as the rest of us?

BOB RALEIGH: We're dry. (Laughter) All I can say is that it's, I'm very pessimistic, I'm not very optimistic about what is going on as we look at our --- at the weather and forecasting we've done on both range and our meadowlands as well. We've showed on the slides there, one of the things we should do is change the type of crop to make better use of your water. We're not in a position here where we can do that, very readily. Some of the new irrigators can, but on these flood meadows you have a very extremely high water requirement. And I made a comment to Forey on the drip irrigation ... that a drip wouldn't go very far on these meadows. And so we do have a problem that's quite a lot different from some of the others, and there are some alternatives and livestock management that we are and intend to do more talking about and studying about as the

year goes on. But any of these are only going to be a matter of a choice of which is the best or the least evil, whichever way you want to put it.

DALE WHITE: Thank you. Paul, the extension service have any ---

PAUL FRIEDRICKSEN: We don't have any program today, but help bring water I guess. We will provide information out, and assimilate information as it becomes available. I think we're a little concerned with --- more this coming fall as far as feed situation. And I feel that there is some concern of a lot of forage moving out of Oregon, going into areas that are being declared disaster areas now, and we're losing some of that forage that we're going to be needing this fall. And that is a concern that I have, anyway. We do work, and we have been working and visiting with Squaw Butte. There's management alternatives that almost have to be handled on a ranch-by-ranch basis, and many of the people that are --- have been here for a long time and have been through some of these dry situations before, and are aware of these. And you people that haven't been, well we'll be trying to work with them on, basically inventorying feed resources and trying to work alternatives or management plans that will best utilize that with the livestock that they have, and maintaining breeding herds. So, that's about what we have.

DALE WHITE: I see we have some people here from the state health department. I'm going to call the ... to come up and comment on it.

ED ? : Well, my name is Ed ... with the state health division. We do water samples in the county on private land or relationship to domestic use and I would say that probably 80 percent of the water installations that I looked at in Harney County are not of proper construction, and lend themselves to rodents getting in. We have years with little water, why the chances increase that you're going to have these little critters getting into your water supply. So this is one thing you might think about is looking at your domestic water supply systems and --- a lot of times it's just a matter of tightening the bolts on a sanitary

seal if you have one, or required sanitary seal ...

Some of the water systems on the ranches down in the Steens, and in, possibly Trout Creek, and then Pueblo, just basically surface water systems. And there are some things that we can do that might increase a little bit of water out of those types of systems that we can work with you. And the end result would be that you'd have a far safer water supply and what they're having now. What I mean is we've been drinking this water for twenty-five years, and it's pretty tough to change it overnight, so ... change some of those systems ---

DALE WHITE: That service is available?

ED: It's available. There's no cost to it. There is three of us, the engineer and two sanitarians covering ten and a half counties in eastern Oregon, so we'll do what we can do for you.

MAN: Where is your office?

ED: I'm located in Bend. We're located out of Bend, and ---

DALE WHITE: ... We've had five people asking ...

ED: Okay, well it's 2115 N. E. Studio Road, the phone number is 389-2774. Most of the requests, I should say about all of them comes through the public health nurse. ... downstairs. If your neighbors are having trouble with diarrhea and vomiting, or both --- one or the other, probably better have them get in touch with us, because there is a lot of things that we can do to make the water safe ... and work with people and ...

DALE WHITE: Bob.

BOB FREE: I'm Bob Free with the department of environmental quality, also out of Bend. And about the only area that we have in this county that would be involved with the water, would be our eastern sub-surface sewage permits. I can tell you that we have been in this area about three years, and we've gotten to know the areas as far as where

your water table comes ...

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BOB FREE: ... probably delayed people on maybe three or four occasions where we have been into an area where we're not sure of how high that water did come. We're looking to seasonal high water time of year, which is usually this time of year. And right now if some of you are proposing to build a house, most of the area there around Burns here, we would have a pretty good idea what it looked like last year because of being over here. But if somebody was --- in some areas several miles out of town where we're unfamiliar with how high the water table does come to, we might, we might have to ask that they delay it a year so that we can see it in a more normal year.

I'm totally unfamiliar with what the department is going to be doing over in the valley where we have a lot of industries that discharge waste to the rivers. But I know there has been a lot of talk, and I think there is special emergency powers that the environmental quality commission can take on dealing with the discharges to those rivers.

...

DALE WHITE: Is there anyone that ... but I'll ask anyway ... is there anyone here from either Banks or ... that might give some insight on ... Is anybody aware of ... agriculture ...

MAN: ... the last word I heard ... for extending loans and some additional low interest loans ...

DALE WHITE: ... see, I haven't heard from ...

VIC ?: Well I think we foresee some problems as far as ... fishing are concerned. Particularly ... water and streams ... where you have a business ... as far as ... are concerned. We have ... except in those areas ... We have ... as early as possible ... We plan to ... restocking of ... And as far as wildlife is concerned, I think our main concern

there is ... and they may have problems with competition again ... and in some of those areas it may be quite serious. We don't have plans at the moment for taking water into those areas ... particularly in the cases of cattle and horses. But perhaps we may have to. ... this is a distinct possibility in some areas ... We may be looking at, the fact of the matter is ... It depends on what ...

DALE WHITE: Thank you Vic. ... something very soon, or what?

MAN: ... definite at all. I think there's ... and there is a request in congress for additional funds to gather horses ... (Laughter)

MAN: Well Ed, did you have any problems with the ... or ...

ED: ... (Too far from microphone to hear)

MAN: Do you think it would be possible you could have a domestic water problem ...

ED: Yes, it's possible. ... a real dry year ...

MAN: ... Well, I'm sure there would be some available on the ... when you're talking about a grant to rebuild new wells ... and ... and there has been some speed-up on some other municipal systems

...

MAN: Thank you ... And I'd like to ask ... this here is considering in communities that are building and such. If they are considering moratoriums ... on building ... purposes of conserving water. Of course as far as I think the city of Hines and Burns is concerned we are pretty secure this year in our wells. If this is something that should happen, or a community might enforce a moratorium?

MAN: Well, certainly ... critical situations, has been one consideration, along with restricting certain uses, such as lawn watering, washing cars, and a number of others. There are no communities in the State of Oregon right now that have implemented that kind of a restriction. They have all been voluntary requests that so far have been done.

But there are several of them that are considering those other means and methods of enforcing the conservation of water and encouraging ... certain communities are seriously considering those. The old time system of the more water you use, just like electricity, the less it cost you per gallon, and there are several of them that are considering drastically revising that so that only the first hundred acre plant would be out of ... several times ... to enforce conservation.

I might also mention since you're talking on that, I have a supply of ... of pamphlets that ... it's primarily household oriented conserving water. You can pick them up if you want, if this runs out you can get some from Joe later in his office, and also ... on water law, and water runs.

I want to emphasize that the drought, or the dry spell is a problem associated, is in effect all our offices ... and with any of these things we will work with you ... and try to help you do whatever you can. The only real meeting place ... is on the conservation of water and we will be leaning on that throughout. Yes ...

MAN: ... (Too far from microphone)

DALE WHITE: Does anyone have any specific questions of ...

MAN #1: I don't particularly have a question, but I did --- I think the state is going to be behind the times. I know the governor, or the director of agricultures committees to monitor this drought situation and they're unable to do anything about it just yet. But we're in a position where we're going to lose all the forages that we --- out of here if we can't get something done. Now California is hauling hay out of here, and Klamath and everything else like it's going out of style. Those people are getting 80 percent of the haul plus 2 cents a pound on the hay, and government assistance. And I've been a trying, and trying to get some action taken down there, so we can get a government subsidy or what we can get. But just stop it so we can keep our, our number of cattle here and every --- I

think whether government or whatever it is, why any forage that is available, should be made available. Also I heard when I was in Salem a week ago, that the state might have a bunch of water trucks available, that they could use. And I was down --- just got back from there, but I was in a meeting with some senators from the people who were meeting out there, and I didn't find out and I thought that they were going to be here tonight, but this water hauling stuff ... I think a cow will drink at least three times the amount of water she normally drinks if you're hauling it to her. (Laughter) And the facility to haul this with is really expensive to begin with. If we could get some kind of assistance that way it would help a lot, because we might only need this one year. We don't like to have to put out a big investment for this. And I understand the BLM and the --- Joe Mazzoni told me the other day they had a tanker, and we --- somebody had to furnish the tractor for that tanker, but the BLM had the first priority on it for fire fighting. But these are the things that are going to help this situation a lot if we can get some kind of assistance this way. And try to get to them forage stopped, going into California. But why do we have to be after the fact, and letting all of this hay going out of here, trying to compete with that kind of a price, why whether you get into a drought one year or two years, the situation is at hand now, and it certainly not going to get any better even with spring rains, I don't think, on the hay forage.

And so I think this thing has gotten real critical plus the fact that this drought is so wide spread, that forage in the whole west is on a limited basis, and people are going to have to dump their cattle because of the drought, why this --- no place to go but the market is going to go down.

And so I think this drought situation is far more critical than any other drought situation we have had, because we --- there is a few cattle moving now, but most people are holding off to see whether we're going to get some spring rains for some grass and

this kind of thing. Well, if we don't get them, this a natural reaction. I'm not criticizing anybody that isn't selling their cattle until the last moment, but when they do have to sell these cattle at the last moment, they're going to flood the market on these things, and go down.

We've got a meeting in Montana going on right now to try to stop the import situation for the duration of this drought. Which we think we ought to, because we're going to have a lot of these hamburger cattle --- well the type of cattle, the lean meat cattle that are coming on the market, and that's what we get into from the foreign country anyway. But it really hurts me a little bit to think that the sates sitting back and not trying to take care of this situation, or I'm not saying they're not trying to, they are not able to take care of this situation, when this is the most critical situation we've ever been in, like today. But I would like, I was hoping that some of the Department of Agriculture would be here, because they told me they'd have a report that they had quite a few trucks that could haul water, and I thought they would be here tonight to answer these questions. But I didn't get to find that out in Salem. But this would certainly alleviate our problem by quite a little bit if the state could furnish some trucks. Do you know anything about that?

MAN: I don't know about the answer ... I know there is some work being done on this national guard trucks for hauling water ... and try to find some others from state sources, but I --- the last word I heard I didn't hear the answer to it, all I knew is that it was being worked on.

But certainly your comment will be taken back and we'll get, we'll try to get an answer back on it as soon as we can.

MAN #1: Well, before I get through I want --- there isn't too many stock people here tonight, but I've asked Paul to help me monitor this drought situation on forced sales, and

anything like this. And I'd like to have them turn it into Paul because we'll be down to a meeting the first part of April, and I want to know how many cattle is going out of this county on account of forced sales on this drought situation, hay, grass, or otherwise. Because I think this is a real serious situation in this county right now, and I'd sure hate to have the state act after the fact. And that's what I think is going to happen.

MAN: On this water tank business, one of them, the contractors have lots of them. And sometimes they are busy, and sometimes they're not. It might pay to contract, contact the social --- contractors for the ACC in Portland, and get ...

DALE WHITE: Anyone else have a question or comment to that?

...

Well, I'm ROBERT MOOREHEAD, and some things have been going out here ... See our weather is created over northern Siberia, and Russia has been modifying the weather. This is a definite fact. And Russia is controlled by the banks, especially on Wall Street, many people don't realize that. And our cattle situation is a political deal. When we got a ... to the numbers to what we can supply ourselves. We was getting meat from Australia, and then very little at that time. And Nixon made arrangements with the bankers of course so ... Japan and West Germany and they closed the doors. And Australia needed to come here. And it takes very little to tip the scale. Then we can control the world, is the way to do it ... its sending up gas and explosions in Nevada, cause a turbulence and bring moisture out. It would take a great deal of study but our source is pretty reliable.

DALE WHITE: Anyone else? I'd kind of like to echo what Charlie says ... especially from the livestock ... I think we ... feels that ... whatever it might be with the stocks that we have on hand ... without too much difficulty. Those of you in the cattle business know and are aware of ... where we're just about to get our head of the ... and the bankers tell me that ... Harney County are going to bail out ... this fall ... It seems to me it would be a

terrible thing to ... suddenly ... by actions the governor could take. For instance some of these high desert counties to realize the fact, you know, that maybe we're not a hundred percent sure that this lack of water now is going to be a disaster in July or August. But we are pretty darn sure it's going to be one. And we need to do something now to provide these ranchers with some opportunities to ... all the feed in the spring or start a little bit earlier in the fall ... herds together. Prior to this from what I've been told, the only resource we had was that we could sell the herds off, and get some tax breaks and then some low interest loans to buy it back. But we all know that we put a new herd on the ranch, you've got problems for a year or two until that herd gets used to the various conditions that you're working with, and not benefit the production that you would have had otherwise ...

It's my experience, or has been if you buy cows from the outside ... you don't have, and then ... that they don't have, and ... on both sides of the fence. If there is some way we could ... together we would hope that maybe rains and snows would come back next fall and we'd be out of this problem. I think that's the real concern that we have. You have to make ... on her deathbed ... starts with some help. ... some penicillin right now. ... If your office is heading up ... I suppose you've heard this from a lot of sources. But it's true here also. ... some of the disaster programs that Fred was talking about ... given the opportunity to compete on the level with California and others who are taking our resources away from us ... local livestock operators the opportunities to hold their herds together ... and see what's what.

I was wondering, especially on the BLM and the Forest Service if some program became available where there was some funds for some water hauling and distribution is there carry-over forage from last year, you can just spread it out over the whole range that would relieve some of that problem. Is that true, false or what?

BILL PHILLIPS: Of course the situation varies from place to place. Now we do have

some areas where we have some rotations in effect that they --- they're all --- there is some forage available. Of course most of that is going to be used. And we do have an area that if we could get a pipeline in Beulah for instance we could borrow some forage. But we can't right now. We have hauled some water.

Of course a lot of our range is going to be difficult to haul water to, if somebody acquired a truck. We just don't have that kind of roads. But we are trying to use what forage is available, you know, from different ways. But there is really not too big of a gap there ... keep talking about, and reading about it while ... drought develops. So I think we've arrived. We're setting at the first of March at about 28 percent of normal ... timber, and really since 1972, was the last time we had enough moisture that we really say was up above normal. Since '72, we've had one year that was slightly above normal and the rest of them have been below normal, and even times when it was well beneath the moisture for growing grass. And so we've arrived at a drought situation, we keep talking about like if it is going to happen, you know just friends talking to people, and what ... But we're there. And even if we had a normal amount through June, we're still in a drought.

MAN: You bet.

CHRIS WHEELER: There isn't any question about that, it's been known since about the first of January as far as the eastern part of the state, and all the snow pack out there. There is no question.

And I think I tried to say that a couple times at the very start, that this was an existing situation, wasn't a question. You might ... range, and you might look optimistically but the best we can look at is very pessimistically on it. And as of the first of January we were in trouble on all of Eastern Oregon and on the snow pack streams.

One of the reasons that we're here is to try and give some ideas or some help for specific questions of what can be done to help ... If there is anything --- if we can do it,

and find out what it is, we'll do the best we can to ... We don't profess to be the all-seeing wizard or the wisdom of Solomon. So we are hopeful that we can cooperatively work together and get the job done. I know there has been some work already done on the feed question, or is being done, or trying to be done, and in hauling it out. I can't tell you what all those steps ... I haven't been up on that particular part. ... three weeks but ... being discussed on it, and trying to work out --- Certainly if there is anything that can be done ... that's the time to know.

There are a number of programs that are being proposed in this legislature to assist --- to ... this drought that is already here. You're too late ... it will be a long range program ... But when you talk about those ...

DALE WHITE: I think the ... heard from was ... the governor's office ...

RICHARD (?): I'm Richard ... from the ... relations division. The governor has written to each of the cities in the counties ... particular municipal water supply systems. Asking them to develop contingency plans and monitor their situations and to let the governor and/or Don Jones the administrator of the ... relations division. Let them know what the problems are as far in advance as you are able to, in any of the cities. So that we can take that information and see what we can do to help in that respect. If you come up short and you don't have any water, we'll be going on emergency services division to start hauling water. Otherwise we will be going on ... water source supply and ... and others as the case might be. But we also will be looking at some of these other grant programs or aid programs to see what aid might be put to use. So again we ask any city or water supply systems to keep the governor or Don Jones informed so that we can provide some help wherever we can.

MAN #1: Dale, I hope that --- we've been waiting long enough, I agree with Bill back there, I don't care how much it rains from now on, we're not going to have a hay crop in

this county. And I think it's damn well time that we started initiating some of this. I told the director that the other day and we can get some grass or some rain all right, but we're without we get a foot of snow and a rain right behind it, we're not going to fill any water holes.

And I realize that while a lot of the places you're not going to have accessibility that get to places to haul water to. But I think those that are available and accessible, why I think we better get to planning them. I just think we're down deep in this drought, and it's time to act, I believe.

DALE WHITE: I think we would agree with that. ...

CHRIS WHEELER: Well, no not really, except I thank you all for coming here and contributing, with the comments you've made on it. We are not always sure ... results of what we do, and we are aware of the problem and we are very much concerned with the ... done as quickly as we possibly can, with whatever help is needed.

MAN #1: I have one more question before you close. What is the difference between this situation this time. We've had emergency drought programs in here before; when we weren't a tenth of a concern we are this time. Now why is it that we can't act on this thing now? I don't understand what the director and the governor has been a telling us that California has been in a drought two years so they're eligible for this. Back in Nebraska they're going on three years, and their hay situation back in Nebraska they can only feed just the dairy cattle. And in California they can feed it to anything. And in Oregon, why we --- we are not even eligible yet. Because we haven't been in a drought long enough. We've had emergency drought situations before here and got some relief on emergency feed grain, and different things immediately, practically. 'Cause we had surpluses then, we probably don't have the surpluses now, but the whole idea is just a ... I just don't understand this ---

MAN: Maybe Richard could answer ... my quick answer would be I'm a waterman not a feed grain. And all I know is what I was told by the others ... Maybe Richard has a better answer.

RICHARD: ... generally the --- in order to get a disaster declared, you do have to measure damage and show, you know, dollar wise that there is damage. And up until this last month there was no ... for this purpose. However, this information has now been gathered and for example in the wheat belt of Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla, Sheridan, lots of counties, they are having problems up there. There is not enough moisture in the ground to get that wheat up. It's only so high, and it should be much higher ...

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... and the ... chairman of that but we haven't had a full meeting of that board. But I had a request from my state office to give them a drought status report, and I made this report the 7th day of this month. And I talked to Paul about it, and come up with some figures.

Estimated acreage of meadowlands in the county is approximately 95,000 acres. We estimated acres lost at approximately 55,000 that would not be producing ... hay this year. There would be some grass, but not for hay production. The alfalfa land, approximately 20,000 acres with a thousand acres being damaged. Most of that alfalfa is in, in and under irrigation ... sprinkler and well. The rangelands, approximately six million acres, and we figured between twenty-five to fifty percent loss. And that was as of the 7th day of this month.

DALE WHITE: Has the ASCS ... They used to have some input on this declaring an emergency ... Does that ... within your powers?

MAN: Well yes, somewhat. The county committee will be meeting this month. But with the situation we see is that right --- this hay is going out of the county is a very critical

problem. But until the governor and president take some type of action, our hands are tied.

We are, we are inclined to go real hard with this water hauling deal. But I would hope that something would be done on this, as much as can be. If we could implement that, why we would solve I think some of the problems here that we are facing right now, in the early part of the spring.

MAN: ... action on this at all?

DALE WHITE: Not yet.

MAN: ... procedures involved. The county courts have to take action ... governor ... emergency services ...

DALE WHITE: ... Okay, I think probably we have done about all we can tonight. I appreciate each one of you coming out, and for the part you've played here. I think the most important thing is that ... you who are directly affected as consumers of forage or ... especially those in livestock ... to Paul, and between him and the ASCS we will do our part to justify and maybe BLM and the Forest Service and Refuge, some of these other people can be helpful in finding us some kind of evaluation ... at least do our part ... Thank you all for coming, especially Chris ...

MAN: ...

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