

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #441 – Side A/B

Subject: Fire

Place: Harney County Courthouse, Burns, Oregon – County Court Meeting

Date: July 19, 2000

Interviewer: Official Meeting Tape

SIDE B

HARNEY COUNTY JUDGE STEVE GRASTY: At some point say your name so we get it on the record.

TOM DYER: I'm Tom Dyer, District Manager of Burns.

RUSS TRUMAN: Russ Truman, Assistant Fire Management Officer for Fuels and Fire Planning with the Burns Inter-Agency Fire Zone.

MARK SHERBOURNE: Mark Sherbourne, National Resource Specialist, BLM Burns.

JEFF ROSE: Jeff Rose, Fire Ecologist for the Burns Inter-Agency Fire Zone.

TOM: We thought we'd try to focus on two things today. One was a land's issue that was requested, but also to fill you in for what we're having for prescribed fires. Maybe fire in general. As you know the result of the past two years, and especially the prescribed fire, is that there is a lot more scrutiny on prescribed fires. Prescribed fire planning, prescribed fire complexity, planning for escape type situations, and a lot more oversight. And what I'd like these guys to do and --- which one wants to go first? Jeff?

JEFF: Russ can go first.

TOM: Russ can go first, okay.

RUSS: We actually got together and planned this.

TOM: Kind of give us a rundown on where we're at inside the fire zone. This would be both BLM and the Forest Service. As far as acres, what we got going, and kind of keep your fingers crossed as we go through this.

RUSS: Why?

MAN: Yeah.

JACK DRINKWATER: You mean after Los Alamos you keep your fingers crossed?

TOM: Fingers crossed on getting all of the planning done, and the amount of review and this type of thing to make sure that we can get our acres that they're identifying, actually achieved, being in prescription and such. So have fun.

RUSS: I will. Let's see. The handout that I just gave you shows the --- in the top line what we've accomplished so far this physical year as far as prescribed fire treatments and mechanical field treatments. Most of what we have accomplished so far this year was accomplished last fall in October, in four different projects up on the national forest. The rest of the year we have quite a bit of work that we planned to do. Most of it's down in the rangelands. When Tom was talking about the planning process, the burn plans that we've got for these projects are just about done. And as a result of some things that have happened in other places this year, the state office is going to come out and do reviews of those burn plans to make sure that the contingency planning, the complexity analysis, and the risk analysis and things like that are up to standards for the particular projects, for each individual project, before we can do those things.

On the Forest Service side they're not making us go through the state review of burn plans, but we are sitting down on our own and making sure that all the burn plans we have accomplished are sufficient for each project. Taking into account complexity, risk analysis, and the contingency planning and indicators of drought and whatnot.

The 2001 acres that we have scheduled there are more than the zone has accomplished in the year, in any year, so far to date. A little bit of those numbers could change based on range allotments. And which range allotments we get scheduled that are approval to go in and actually complete some prescribed burning, and which ones we have to stay out of. We may have to swap some units to work with permittees and work with other resources and functions, which we are more than willing to do within the program.

Other things that we have going on besides the actual on the ground fuel treatments in the next six to nine months are developing the zone monitoring plan so that we can see if we are meeting the objectives for each individual project. Doing an inventory of the wildland urban interface that we have within the zone. We'll use that information when it comes time to sit down and write the fire management plans this winter. There will be some key areas --- there will end up being some key areas for us as far as identifying areas of critical suppression, and areas where we may need to do some fuels treatment to protect some investments that folks have.

We'll be doing some fire regime mapping, and condition class mapping, and it's an offshoot of the cohesive strategy on reducing hazardous fuels in the Western U.S. that the Forest Service put out this winter. We are starting to work on that right now.

We're going to develop a fuel strategy for the zone. And all those things will tie in together with the fire management plans that we tiered to the land and resource management plans that are in existence for the different areas that we need to ride over the next 18 months or so.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER DAN NICHOLS: One of the questions that keeps coming up, and maybe you can help answer that, is that if we have a fire out there, and we --- looks like it's burning stuff we want it to burn, you know, this is a question we get over and over. Why do we put it out? Now what is the situation where we can allow something to burn, if it is under a natural ignition?

RUSS: With a natural ignition, with the federal fire policy, if we have an approved fire management plan that allows us to do wildland --- manage wildland fires for resource benefits, we can do it. Currently at this time we don't have on the zone, or the national forest lands, we do not have a fire management plan that meets the specifications to allow us to do that. That's, that has to be, also approved in the resource management plan, or the land management plan for the public lands. And I need to look a little closer at that. Some of the land management plans we may need to do some amendments to allow that in the future.

JACK: Well now this late in the season I wouldn't think you would be doing any prescribed burns much, would you?

RUSS: Not until --- we probably won't start anything up until September, first shot of fall rains.

JACK: Well now on one of these fires, now you're smoking a lot of stuff --- fill this whole valley. Do you have to go through the DEQ for that?

RUSS: There is a couple of different things we have to do. We have to meet all applicable state and local laws, and federal laws in regards to air quality. There is an agreement with Northeast Oregon Forest and the BLM that includes the Baker Resource Unit and the Three Rivers Resource Unit where there is a cap on emissions from prescribed burning and wildfire. That's a 17,500 acres, or 17,500 tons of particulate cap. Within Northeast Oregon we have never come close to reaching that cap. The three forest and the BLM, or the fire zone unit here have for the last couple of years been doing conference calls on a daily basis during prescribed burning season to help set priorities to make sure that we are not concentrating too much smoke in one area. To make sure that the work that I'm doing doesn't add on to the work that say the Willowa-Whitman is doing, and increasing the smoke impacts in one place. ... to do is to get a smoke management forecast from the forecasters in Salem and use that as a judgement, a decision making device on whether we should actually burn on that day or not.

JACK: Well another thing I've always asked, ordinarily you burn in the spring, which is completely reverse of the way Mother Nature would do it. Has that upset the ecology in any way? I mean you're burning at a time of the year when normally it doesn't burn.

JEFF: There is a lot of things going on Jack, and we have a lot more fuel than we used to have. So it is not really a natural system right now that we're dealing with. Once we --- I would vision once we get the system back to where we think it should be we'll start shifting more and more towards the fall burns. That's what I'd like to see. But now we've got so much down and dead trees, we've got a lot of young trees coming underneath that we didn't have in the past. Even if we lit the fires in the fall they'd be way too intense and we'd end up killing the overstory, which we don't want to do. Now

we can manage the fire in the spring, keep it cool, let it run underneath, and take out some of those ---

JACK: Now you'll still get a little of overstory, because you're dealing in a place up there where I'm at.

JEFF: Yeah.

JACK: And there is quite a bit of mature timber that got killed in those burns, that were burnt in the spring.

JEFF: And that is some of the goals. Some of the goals is to take some of those big trees, because for wildlife you want to have some of the dead trees and snags. And when you burn you're going to lose those. So you want to replace some of those with some new ... So hopefully we can balance all that. Sometimes it gets a little hot; sometimes we don't get what we want to. In most cases we're too cool in my opinion. I don't know, Russ has done a lot more than I have.

RUSS: And a lot of the burns have been on the cool side. The springtime burns the field moistures are higher, so there is less chance that you're going to have a larger area of severe fire effects, where you're killing, you know, all the trees. I think the instance you're thinking about from what I've been told that an unforecasted weather event happened. Winds that were not forecast at all, suddenly appeared.

JACK: Well there was nobody there checking it.

RUSS: Yeah.

JACK: It was on its own. I mean there was nobody in there.

RUSS: But I've been in the same instance where we've gone out and lit something, and something that wasn't forecasted happened. Whether it was a change in the atmospheric

stability or the winds came up unexpectedly. Those two events can and do happen. We try our darndest to avoid those. And I have lost small pockets of trees before that I didn't intend to lose. And we'll continue to work our tails off to try to make sure that that doesn't happen.

JACK: You just can't convince people that logging is the best way in the world to control all that?

RUSS: Uh --- we're going to work on that. (Laughter) Personally and professionally I think a combination of treatment methods in forested stands is the way to go. You know you get rid of a lot of the bio-mass that you're trying to consume with the fire. And by doing that you've reduced the risk. Professionally I think it is a real good thing. Personally I think we ought to utilize what we can.

JACK: I realize you're not going to get that pushed through, because you've got a spotted owl in your road. But I mean ---

RUSS: I think --- there is really quite a push from above, national levels to do more hazard, what they call hazard tools reduction in forest health things. And I think --- you know the pendulum swings a lot.

JACK: Oh yeah.

RUSS: And I think, you know, we've come to one end, and we're moving back to the center to get that number of acres we need to treat. We're going to have to use all the tools available to us. And I think --- that's where it comes on us to say look, we have a tool that we're not using, let's use it. The same thing is in the BLM country with the herbicides and cheat grass. We could use a herbicide in the cheat grass to help control that. And right now we're not really allowed to do that. And eventually I think it will

come to where, you know, the light bulb will come on somewhere and say, well yeah that makes sense. So if we keep pushing it I think it will get there eventually.

STEVE: Where are you guys in the regard to the development of the management plan for wildfire?

RUSS: We're working off of plans that are about two years old. They were plans that were developed before the implementation; guidelines for the current federal fire policy were issued. They are current with the current land and resource management plans that we have.

TOM: I guess Russ, where I think he is coming from on it would be that based on the one example, say we got a natural fire started out there. Say we have a prescribed plan that's already in this location, do we still have to meet prescription, or can we let it go, or how do you do that.

RUSS: Right now we can still use an appropriate management response. We can use the confined, contained, controlled strategy or full suppression strategy on the fire depending on the resources that are at risk. To actually do wildland use for resource benefits like they're doing in some of the wilderness areas in Montana and in the Ulacaps, it would take us probably a full year to get a written plan approved. To be able to do something in a, like that in any specific location within the county. But we still can do, you know, contained strategies or control strategies back off like to a good natural barrier road, or whatever.

TOM: We had a meeting in Diamond earlier on this year, we met some landowners down there and we had kind of a field day. We talked about a lot of different issues. And when this came up down there, and we actually got together and we got agreement



down there is that we're going --- in different areas like in the Fields area and the Diamond area, the Drewsey area, we give the land owners, and find out the areas that they would like to see more, you know. Let --- I don't want to say wet burns, but wildlife fire for resource benefit, which used to be called prescribed natural fires.

RUSS: If they had a lightning fire started, it would be okay to let it move to this location. And they were going to identify some natural features that we could use to control fires with, and areas where it was okay, and areas where they didn't want to see a wildfire spread to.

JACK: Now what is that you dropped to start these fires with? It's pretty potent, because it just fired up there on the river on our allotment and killed some willows. Now I mean it killed them, they have never come back.

RUSS: Well there is a couple of different things. I'm assuming you're talking about out of a helicopter.

JACK: Yep.

RUSS: You can use jelled gasoline with a drip torch, suspended under the helicopter basically. It's like an napalm. Or you can use ping-pong balls which have potassium permanganate inside. And they get a squirt of anti-freeze into them, and the combination of the two chemicals will ignite.

JACK: That's pretty potent when it hit them willows, because it done them in.

RUSS: The majority of what we're doing here is the ping-pong ball ignition. And you can go slow enough with that that you're putting out maybe 5 balls per acre. So you're not lighting all that much at once. Or you can tighten up the number of balls you're dropping per acre, and get a hot fire going at once. And that's ---

JACK: And another thing we'd like, is when you've got these prescribed burns, now in our allotment up here there has been four or five in the same area. And you're pretty hard on fences. And they just go off --- and old CC fences built there in the '30's, that's pretty historic. We're still in good shape. I mean we use it all --- I've been using --- burn them up and just go right on about their merry business until we just explode and take after them before they'll go up and fix them.

RUSS: Uh huh. We'll take that into account.

JACK: Yeah, I mean they ought to know. Because they lay the fence down to drive the four-wheelers over it and just leave her there. I mean they know the fence is down.

RUSS: Okay.

DAN: Back to the wild water management. About three years ago in D.C. that subject was a hot one. No pun intended. Every natural resource meeting, that was the buzzword, the buzz issue, you know. It seems like it is taking quite awhile to get --- or am I misinterpreting. Is there more of it going on than what I think, or is there a lag time between a decision being made, or a policy being developed at the D.C. level, and then getting everything implemented on this end. Or where is that whole issue? They were promoting it big time back there, big time.

RUSS: Well the federal fire policy was, that we're working under right now was introduced in 1995. And they --- we kept getting told to kind of hang on to our horses before we ran off to do a lot of planning and, until we got what was called the implementation guide. And that finally came out about 18 months ago from the national offices. Now we're kind of waiting, now we're waiting to have an outline of what is supposed to go in the new fire management plans, come out from the national offices.

And that should come out sometime in the next couple of months, that outline itself should come out.

STEVE: Is that something we could see a copy of?

RUSS: Sure.

STEVE: I wouldn't mind seeing that.

RUSS: And basically it is going to be an outline. And what they're trying to do with that is they're trying to take the current, what a forest service current fire management plan would look like under the old policy, and take what the BLM's fire management plan would look like. And they're trying --- and the new fire policy, and blend those three things together. And I think they're doing some work to try to make sure that both agencies really buy off on this format before they send it out to folks like us.

JEFF: Russ, is there any chance we could get --- I know they came out with a 2000 red book for us, you know, for managers.

RUSS: Yeah.

JEFF: If we could get these guys a red book --- because that has a lot of the information on prescribed burns, the safety end of things, ... and wildfire escape analysis, all this kind of stuff. And why I suggest that is that if we do run into a situation where we got county lands involved, or even into a situation where we might be on the border of the town, which has occurred here apparently a few years ago. That we could be reading off the same sheet of paper, you know, when we're talking to each other either by phone, or wherever, and walk through it together. So that might be worthwhile for them to have.

TOM: We're lucky to have Russ, because he has actually done this kind of stuff up in the Wallowa Whitman, is that right? He's done a prescribed national fire. He has

experience in doing it, so we now have somebody on board that can help us along, and notice that ... So we're in good shape to get going. We just need to get everything lined up and ready to go.

STEVE: Where it is appropriate, as you do this planning, I wish you would try and involve our emergency services manager and the sheriff's department. But in any urbanized area, and you know that's something different in Harney County, and in most of our counties. But it would be --- it's probably prudent for her as the case is today. I don't know whether that will change or not, but currently their analysis is that person --- it would probably be good to have her involved, because that will get us reading off the same place.

TOM: I know ... is right there. That sheriff's department is on the contact list when we do prescribed fires, so they are notified.

SHERIFF: I think so, the dispatch calls me.

JACK: Russ, are you familiar with the forest prescribed burns up here, say in the little Sagehen, Silvies River area, up in there?

RUSS: A little bit.

JACK: I'm not satisfied with the results. It looked like to me, that up there in little Sagehen is a --- well in the others, are the damndest looking thing when you get done. All it is a bunch of charred stuff on the ground. I mean I can't, I can't see what, how much is accomplished with it. You killed all the little trees, the little short ones, but the debris that is left on the ground, gee it looks like to me you've got stuff there when that dries out you've got a whale of a thing there for a fire.

RUSS: Yeah, what the guys have been trying to do here, is do a ---

JACK: I've got pictures of it, and it's not pretty.

RUSS: Yeah. What the guys have been trying to do here is a series of stage burns where after three burns or so you get to the point where a fire could withstand, or a stand could withstand a fire during the middle of the summertime. And the monitoring work that they've done collecting fuel loads, doing field load sampling before and after burns that are showing that they're reducing the surface fuel loading by about half; taking it from 14 tons per acre of fuel to, down to about six tons per acre of fuel on the average. That reduces the flame length that you'd get in the summertime from a wildland fire. Killing some of the smaller trees eliminates the latter fuels that would take it up into the canopies of the larger trees during a wildfire in the middle of the summer. You know they're in the initial stages of trying to get the forest to the point where it can handle a fire in the middle of the summer. And there have been a lot of cases they're done with stage one, and part way through stage two. And one more burn, hopefully, and they'd be at the point where it would be able to withstand the fire on August 6, 1990. That's their goal, and they're working towards it. We're all working towards it.

JACK: Well I realize it's a trial and error thing. It isn't something you've got a lot of data on, because it hasn't been done that much. But --- and I have hopes --- Because as far as any feed left, I mean it just annihilated any feed in there, whether it is for a cow or for wildlife or whatever, there isn't any.

RUSS: Uh huh.

JACK: It's gone, whatever was there is done. And that's been a number of years ago, and it still hasn't recovered.

RUSS: Okay. We are trying to get to the point where we have a pine forest with grass underneath it. And it will take a little bit more time in some places, but that is our goal.

TOM: I guess it would be thinning type operations that you have also seen that occur out there. A lot of people will come in and talk to me, say those look a lot better than your under ---

JACK: Oh, you bet you're whistling! (Laughter) I'm all for them.

TOM: They look nice in there when you've got crews that come in with chain saws and cut down to a certain size, buck it up, put it in piles, burn the piles. It is kind of clean. But the problem is that that's extremely expensive in there when we go that route. So to get to the level that we need to get to with, of trying to maintain that ecological place we want to get to, we're going to have to take a look at all of the tools we have. And of course fire is probably the least expensive operation to get there. And so we use as much thinning as we can, especially in some of those areas that are a real dog thicket type things that you get --- it's a real hazard to burn. But we can't use that as the only tool.

JACK: Over time though, Tom, I think you're accomplishing more by the thinning, because man the trees you leave there, you can sure see the results. That little sucker you cut off, and in just four or five years, the one you left there, I mean it ... I don't know but what it ain't cheaper.

RUSS: Right now Jack, we're increasing, every year we increase the number of acres we treat. And I've done some rough calculations, if we had the system back to where it was operating pre-settlement times, we're treating less than 10% of the area that would be annually burning right now.

JACK: Well when my mother was a little girl living up there at the end of the summertime it looked like the whole area burned up. They didn't pay attention to it. Of course that's what has happened, you protected it now until you've got so much dam understory it kills all your fir trees.

RUSS: Yeah. Hopefully --- we're working with all the tools; we're working ... to get to that stage. But until we get there it is going to take some time. And we have to treat as many acres as we possibly can with the best method.

JACK: But that thinning, I like that thinning. That really --- what you leave ---

RUSS: I knew you did.

DAN: A couple of questions. Number one, how is your budget? Has the little fire in Colorado caused any shift in thought process from up above?

RUSS: You want me to answer that.

JEFF: Yeah. I haven't seen, in terms of the BLM side, I haven't seen any shift away from doing --- They're still telling us to go forward, and keep working at it. You know they are saying go out and spend the money we have given you, and give us more next year, you know, treat more acres next year. There is a lot of other things going on that I'm not aware of, but Tom might know of.

TOM: Russ could probably answer the Forest Service side there.

JEFF: I think we're in, probably in pretty good shape. I think the critical thing is that Congress is really going to watch how we implement these fires from --- very closely from now on. In other words, the planning had better be right on the nose. Russ is talking about as far as the complexity, the strategies, the whole business. We need to make sure that we fit in that, and we don't take the risk and step outside of our

prescription to do a burn. And it puts, you know, managers in a tough spot. We have got to follow that plan. If we don't follow that plan we could end up with a situation that is just not good.

JACK: Well have I heard wrong, Tom, on the prescribed burn either you or the ranger signs off on it. Yeah, I would be pretty careful too. Holy Moses!

RUSS: In answer to Dan's question, there is going to be more scrutiny as far as ...

JACK: Yeah.

JEFF: The opportunities to mess up might --- they're going to watch for that.

DAN: So realistically the 10% Jeff is talking about might be cut to 5%, just because the burning conditions and the prescribed conditions aren't met year to year.

RUSS: That is correct. And if you're not in ... there was a time in history where they would, you'd write your --- and you try to get in there but there may be in a situation that we're real close, let's go ahead. That's never going to happen again, you know. No manager is ever going to take that, he can't do that. So you're right in that parameter before you can burn. And that's what makes it difficult. And it is very hard for people on the outside to say why don't you burn now. Well you know we're not inside prescription. That's just paper work. Well that's paper work, that if something went haywire on it, that you're going to be hung on.

JACK: Your name is on the bottom.

JEFF: The unfortunate thing, out of a hundred fires you do, nobody ever remembers the 99 you kept within the boundaries. It is always the one that you lose that everybody pays attention to.

DAN: Sure that's politics.



JACK: Well you lose something like there in Los Alamos, of course you get in --- of course that wasn't a prescribed burn I guess in Colorado was it? That was a, nature started that one didn't it, or arsonist, or something?

RUSS: You're thinking Los Alamos?

JACK: Well Los Alamos was a prescribed burn. But I mean the one in Colorado, burnt all the houses up, that wasn't a prescribed burn started there was it?

RUSS: No. You mentioned Colorado, and there was a bill in Congress to try to get some additional funding for the wildland urban interface. And that didn't make it out of the house sub-committee. Just within the ...

SIDE A

RUSS: ... We're trying to establish priorities, you know, and do the inventories on the wildland urban interface, you know. We've got this area out in the middle of the national forest, or surrounded by public lands, and there is a risk just because of the type or the amount of fuels that surround this piece of land. You know what can we do, where does it stack up on the priority list. It would come out higher than say the general forest, or potentially a piece of land in the southern part of the county that no one uses. It doesn't have any private lands anywhere around it so that we could --- you know try to help protect that in the middle of the summer if there is a house there on it.

JACK: Well now are you familiar with Myrtle Creek, the last 10 or 12 miles of it?

RUSS: No.

JACK: Okay. Now is there any way in God's world you could have a, with all the dead stuff in there, is there anyway you could have a prescribed burn in there without losing it all?

JEFF: I'm going to defer to Ken Higle. Because I think you can Jack, I think you can do it. And, I'm an ecologist, and I don't really work in the real world all the time.

KEN HIGLE: I haven't been in there. I've heard it is bad.

JACK: Yes, it's real bad. There is a slug of dead timber in there.

KEN: So what's left in there to save?

JACK: Well there is some big old punkins in there, some whing-dingers should have been logged, but they didn't do it. They're going down too.

KEN: Well we can't log that anyway. You know our hands are tied.

JACK: If it ever catches on fire --- of course all you're going to have is a black canyon.

KEN: Well sure. I mean we had that 10 years ago. And so it sounds like that area needs to have some treatment in it, and get rid of that fuel. Whether it's been --- pile the dead stuff and burn it before you go in and under-burn. That's why we --- it is going to take us, you know, at least three entries in this fire to get a chunk of land back to where it was a 100 years ago. Just because of the fuel loading is so hot and heavy right now, that we go to under-burn it right now, especially this time of year it just burns way too hot.

JACK: Well I don't think, I just don't think there is any possible way in God's world you could start a fire in there without losing the whole damn thing. Because there is mahogany on the westside of that canyon, and if it ever gets into it that's just like putting her in a can of gasoline.

RUSS: We have the tools available to us to get it done. It's just whether we have the funding and the people tough enough to get in there.

JACK: Well I, I want us, to let us get our cattle out of there before --- I don't care what kind of tools you got before you start that one.

DAN: That was the second part of the question. How is your budget? Are you getting the appropriated funds to adequately do what you need to do? Or are you getting orders and not enough money to ---

TOM: I think funding is adequate, if we can show the need and have a planning completed. It's, it's hard to be able to get the money to buy the car if you can't prove that you need one. So our planning kind of provides that proof that we need the fire. And they aren't going to give us money unless we have the plans down to implement it. That's kind of where we're at. We've been pretty successful getting the levels that we have needed, or identified.

RUSS: And actually Dan, last year I believe --- every year that you --- people, you put in for so much ... so many products and sometimes you just don't happen. So you have to turn that money back. Last year Oregon, in our district here, got a lot of that money, that extra money that came back to put on the ground. So we actually did more than we said we were going to do last year. And we achieved more than we initially thought we could. And the money was there to support that. So I think that, the direction I'm getting from the BLM is if you give us the acres, we'll give you the money for right now. You try to do as much as you possible. Last year I think we burned as many acres as we possibly could with the people we had. Because when those guys came off the Steens they were

done for awhile. It was --- they were tired, they'd been up there a long time, working hard. I don't think they could have done a whole lot more.

DAN: Yeah it was ---

RUSS: That was a good year last year.

DAN: Yeah, there was a lot of good ---

RUSS: I hope we can have five years just like that.

DAN: Well back to the mechanical, I assume under the rangeland that's juniper study mostly.

RUSS: It's juniper cutting, and there has been some brush beating included in that. We just --- it's a new thing for us, we haven't done a lot of that.

DAN: Where --- further south you doing the brush beating?

RUSS: ... would be out, kind of south of the experiment station, in that country there.

JEFF: And we have done some in the black rock country too, on national forest lands.

RUSS: Yeah.

JEFF: That seems to have worked out pretty well. Everyone is pleased with the results so far.

MARK: You guys funded a brush beating over on the Alvord Desert this last year.

RUSS: Uh huh.

MARK: Just last year ...

DAN: And that is done?

MARK: Uh huh.

DAN: It looks pretty good?

RUSS: It's really kind of a neat tool. And it's --- some people who aren't really into fires like the brush beating a whole lot better. Of course I'm biased, and I'd rather do it the other way. But it gives us different things. It makes the ground look different. It's not as severe a disturbance in some cases.

DAN: It's kind of a risk with the fire versus the brush beating and soil temperatures as a result of fire. You just never know about that variable. And that's a pretty big, pretty big risk factors.

RUSS: And with the grass issue coming on, that seems to be more palatable than brush beating because it leaves a lot of little shrubs. In my opinion, it buys you time. So you know it's there, it needs to be burned now. Maybe you can delay that in 20 years, we'll brush beat it down, and pick it up later and we get some other things coming back. And it is another tool that we can use really effectively. So that's part of that. There is also in that --- it is on the rangelands there is a lot of juniper cutting going on. And it's about, about two thirds of that is going on down in the Steens country. And about a third of it is going on up in Otis Mountain area.

STEVE: You done with fire, and ready to move on to --- do we have any questions?

DAN: I'm sure we could stand ...

MAN: When it gets ---

MARK: We got a phone call just the other day from John Bowman, who I think was in line to purchase 20 acres.

MAN: He made an offer.

MARK: Okay. He was asking us about rights of ways and stuff. So we got to looking at where the legal was, and its, it actually sits --- this is a map of the Davis exchange and the

dark red stuff is what we're getting from Ed, and the 20 acres sits right here. Pretty much surrounded it. There are other 20's in there, just because that is the land pattern down in that country. And we are trying to pick up a couple other small parcels from Gary Campbell who had previously bought from the county. And he has elected to move down closer to Wildhorse Valley on a better piece of country actually. But anyway, so I had called Steve and asked him if he would consider somehow --- this particular tract of ground could likely end up being whatever designation the Steens ends up having. The access to it also crosses a mile of private land, and then another three-quarters of a mile of public. And then a new road would have to be built, about a half a mile of road built into the property. So Steve and I discussed the possibility of this particular piece of property. For right now, particular since it is going to fall, probably fall within designated area, somehow could the BLM in either purchasing or trading the County for that property. And then we started talking about the Frenchglen community zone and ---

STEVE: That's interesting, because one of your fellow BLM employees offered to double your offer. (Laughter) I'm not sure he had the information, but ---

TOM: And you're ... going to give me his name either. (Laughter)

STEVE: Well I like him.

MARK: Black has been, asked us to keep it a secret.

STEVE: I didn't say that.

RUSS: Now that's a county piece of ground there then, is what you're saying. Were you guys interested in ---

STEVE: We'd take 160 acres of Frenchglen for it. (Laughter)

MARK: I don't think Richard wants it. Now you've seen the possible expansion of the rural community zone in Frenchglen?

STEVE: Certainly.

MARK: Okay. And the parcel of land that the BLM was wanting to contribute to that. Have you seen that?

DAN: Maybe not, maybe not.

STEVE: You're saying certainly.

MAN: No. You have seen it. Richard presented the rural community boundaries.

DAN: Well ours, yeah. But not these guy's. We're talking about getting their land.

MARK: Yeah. Well what Richard (Richard Jennings, Harney County Planning) had proposed originally was he looked at the stripped area that --- there is private land that, the east part of that is private land. And then when you see the background in yellow, that's what we had decided, or decided that we would throw into the mix as far as expanding the rural community zone of Frenchglen. What brought it up was some of the negotiations that were going on with John Witzel and development up higher upon the mountain. And BLM's position that we would try to help locate businesses lower down on the mountain within the vicinity of Frenchglen, or some of the other rural communities. And so when I was talking to Richard, we just started kicking it around, and so our position is that we would, we would like to add this. I think it is 22 acres of public land at this point to the 10 acres of expansion that Richard had already chosen, which is private. And see whether or not that would give an opportunity for whatever kind of business expansion that the county deemed that they wanted to do down there. Give the county an opportunity or a place to have that happen.

JACK: Well is this run up on the hillside?

MARK: Yes.

JACK: I thought you was bridging something here when I first looked at this.

MARK: The highway is actually the south boundary.

JACK: Okay.

MARK: That's Pea Hill.

JACK: Pea Hill going right --- okay.

MARK: But it is a pretty good piece of ground. It flattens out right there. You can see the topal lines on the public land portion of it; it's a nice little piece of ---

STEVE: I'm confused with terminology here a little bit, Mark. When you're talking about adding to an expansion, and I'm certainly no expert on this, but we went through a pretty intense process to get the boundaries changed for rural communities. I don't know that we're going to be able to add to that boundary. I don't know if we're talking about the same thing here. Just because we add land in the area it doesn't mean that expands our boundaries. It doesn't --- our call if it was, there would probably be quite a bit more of this.

DAN: This is a clearing process, and all that stuff again.

STEVE: That's what I'm getting at.

TOM: Yes, it's not automatically --- no.

STEVE: I'm certainly not saying it's not doable, but it isn't just cut and dry either.

MARK: Right.



STEVE: And I heard, I think I heard, LCDC or --- yeah, say to us that they were resisting of expanding those rural communities. I wish Richard was here to add to that. But ---

MARK: He had, Richard, I don't know who he called, he called somebody in the state and asked them whether or not this would be a reasonable expansion on top of the 10 acres that you had already proposed. And the gentleman, and I can't remember his name, said yeah, that sounds reasonable to him.

STEVE: All right.

MARK: So, and I don't know all the hoops, you know, I guess the BLM's position is make land available for expansion of communities to whatever extent the county wants to expand. Rather than, you know, lock it up somehow, and then whenever, you know, the county has a need to locate other businesses or something there, there is, you know, there is no room to wiggle. So our land use plans make available land directly adjacent to these communities for selection from the county to enlarge their ---

DAN: Directly --- directly adjacent, contiguous.

MARK: Right.

DAN: So --- where are we here. This chunk up in here is out of the question.

MARK: Well for right now, for two reasons. One it's in a wilderness study area.

JACK: Yeah, you guys in your wilderness study.

MARK: Yeah, the other reason is between Richard --- it has to be contiguous. You can't just take chunks here and there.

DAN: Yeah.

MARK: But that is a nice, that is a nice piece of land.

DAN: Well yeah, you can put your development back up in there. It is visually not ---

STEVE: You'd have to be in the right spot to see it.

DAN: Yeah, visually it's non-existent up in there. It's a good place to put it. This, you know, it doesn't amount to too many acres. This is the stock trail right up through this narrow neck, isn't it, going up the hillside?

MARK: Yes.

DAN: And that's kind of a little bit of a concern. There is still a lot of cattle driven up and down that hillside. It's pretty necessary access route up and down through there.

MAN: Is that tied into that 20 acres?

MARK: I don't know if it's, if the trail goes right through the 20 acres or not.

MAN: Pretty --- I think pretty close, because ---

END OF TAPE

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