



# National Park Service Paleontology Program

## *Oral History Interview – Jill DeStefano*

Natural Resource Report NPS/PALEONTOLOGY PROGRAM/OHI—2021/06



**ON THE COVER**

Jill DeStefano

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The National Park Service, Paleontology Program publishes a range of reports, plans, oral histories and other documents that address a range of paleontological resource topics. These reports are of interest and applicability to a broad audience in the National Park Service and others in natural resource management, including scientists, conservation and environmental constituencies, and the public.

The NPS Paleontology Program disseminates comprehensive information and analysis about paleontological resources and related topics concerning lands managed by the National Park Service. Given the sensitive nature of some paleontological resource information, such as the specific location of fossil sites, some publications are intended for specific audiences and are maintained as restricted access. When appropriate, sensitive information is redacted from reports in order to allow greater access to these reports by NPS staff, partners and the public. This work supports the advancement of science, informed decision-making, and the achievement of the National Park Service mission.

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## Background

[Interview with Jill DeStefano: This interview was conducted Tuesday, June 14, 2021 by phone from her home in Las Vegas, Nevada. The primary speakers are interviewee Jill DeStefano, who is the Founding Member and President of Protectors of Tule Springs, and Vince Santucci, interviewer, NPS Paleontology. They are joined on the phone by Integrated Resources Management Specialist, Erin Eichenberg, Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument at her home in Boulder City, Nevada, and Jonathan Burpee, Superintendent at Lewis and Clark National Historical Park in Astoria, Oregon.]

The interview was recorded on a digital audio recorder and a mp3 file was created. A written transcription of the interview was produced from the digital audio recording and this document contains the discussion during the interview. Jill DeStefano signed a release form for the National Park Service for the preservation and use of the interview in the future.

## Transcript

### 4:56 (Length of interview – Part Two)

[START OF INTERVIEW]

VS: Today is Monday, June 14, 2021. My name is Vincent Santucci (VS), Senior Paleontologist for the National Park Service Paleontology Program. Today, we are conducting a second interview with Jill DeStefano (JD) President and Founding Member of the Protectors of Tule Springs. The prior interview with Jill took place on June 1, 2021. We are accompanied by Erin Eichenberg (EE), the Integrated Resources Management Specialist at Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument. Unfortunately Jonathan Burpee, current Superintendent at Lewis and Clark National Historical Park and the first permanent Superintendent at Tule Springs [Fossil Beds National Monument] may be delayed and may join us later in the interview. [Vince is at his home in Gettysburg, and Erin is in Nevada.] The interview is being conducted by telephone from Jill's home in North Las Vegas, Nevada. Hello again, Jill.

JB: Hello Vince and Erin. Thank you.

VS: So, we wanted to pick up where we left off. Can you as best as you can recall your feelings when you were becoming confident that Tule Springs may become an official unit of the National Park Service in December of 2014?

JD: Yes, working closely with the NPCA, the National Parks Conservation Association and Senator Reid's senior staff in Washington D.C. Sara Moffet was his Public Lands Legislative staff head and Shannon Raborn was by then the District Director here in Las Vegas for Senator Reid. We knew there were a lot of negotiations going on to get the Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument legislation to be a part of the National Defense Authorization Act during that year. There were several public lands bills and several parks that were involved in that legislation. We were fairly confident that unless it got kicked out at the last minute this was definitely going to happen. In the beginning of December, I believe it was December 2, 2014 it passed the House of Representatives easily and then on December 12, 2014, I actually was in my classroom that day and it was a Friday. I was watching the Session on the great big screen of my Smartboard in my room because I didn't have pre-school Special Education students that Friday. So, I was actually able to watch the debate live. And to say that was exciting with the votes. There was some dissention from the Republican ranks and I believe most of it was centered around and including other stuff in the National Defense Authorization Bill. But ultimately it passed. All of my teacher friends in the area knew this was happening and was rooting for us. It was extremely exciting. Obviously lots of tears as they come now (voice trembling). And my phone just lit up. I can't tell you how many emails, texts, and phone calls were coming in. Of course I couldn't answer them all right then because I was supposed to be working. It was just the best day ever.

JD: Once it passed the House of Representatives we started pre-planning a celebration party the National Parks Conservation Association and Protectors. We actually had a [audio cuts out] I could get it for free. We had very limited budget then as Protectors and the National Parks Conservation Association put in a little money. And we hired [audio cuts out] the Community College—

VS: Jill I want to stop for a second. So, you're cutting out. I'm not quite sure but we're losing you a little bit. You come back in clear but we've been losing you.

[call starts again]

JD: Uh oh. Should I call in on my phone line then?

VS: Let's see if it happens again. Do you want to go ahead and continue and back up maybe about a minute or so?

JD: Okay. So back up maybe to the senate part?

VS: Yes.

JD: Okay. So after passing the House of Representatives, the Bill came up for a full Senate vote December 12<sup>th</sup> which was a Friday. I happened to be in my classroom at Ronnow Elementary School. But on Fridays I did not have my special education pre-school students in the room so I was able to have the senate hearing and vote on my big screen in my classroom and watch it live as I was doing paperwork and et cetera. To say it was thrilling, to watch the whole thing, was an understatement. It also, unfortunately, there was some dissention and we were kind of sweating it out, from some of the Republicans that there were all of these other things included in the National Defense Authorization Bill which was fairly common if I remember. So it did pass, I've got a screenshot of that vote. And to say I was thrilled is an understatement. All the other teachers in the building knew this was going on and were celebrating with me as well as my phone just lit up. My email, texts, and phone calls; all of which I actually had to deal with later after hours.

6:39

JD: So we had been planning, the NPCA [National Parks Conservation Association] and Protectors, the celebration after the passage by the House. Setting up hopeful celebration at the Sun City Aliante Clubhouse and it was scheduled for December 18<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately the Senate—Senator Reid and Senator Heller couldn't be present at the celebration because they were held at Washington DC past the normal time that they would be during the holidays. Congressman Horsford was there to celebrate with us on December 18<sup>th</sup> and there was about 150 people in attendance. And now it wasn't signed into law until December 19<sup>th</sup> by President Obama. The actual official celebration with the media and press and all the VIPs took place on December 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Las Vegas Paiute Golf Club up near the Corn Creek area in the northern middle part of the monument.

8:12

VS: Are you still there, Jill?

JD: Yeah, yeah. That's, yeah, for that part. Unless you have specific questions.

VS: No that was very good. And so, for the first few months, did you have communication with staff at the National Park Service either the Regional Office or Lake Mead National Recreation Area?

JD: I would say I did not. I know that the National Park Conservation Association, Lynn Davis, was in contact with them. I don't remember any specific discussions myself. I remember warning my board and that now that this was a National Park Service unit that we can expect it to take a while for personnel certainly and for anything to really happen. Because obviously there had to be some planning involved and I just kind of was trying to—there was so much enthusiasm, everyone was so excited. I didn't want people to be disappointed when it took a while to get things going. Protector's has a meeting, our normal membership meeting, at the end of January at the Aliante Library it happened to be at that time in North Las Vegas. And the room we used at a capacity of 70. And there was like a 130 people there. There were people from Corn Creek and Horse community and people who we had never seen before coming to hear about the plans for the monument. And again, I had to just kind of tell people it would take a while before the National Park Service really gets a plan in place. I mean, this is all brand new. So, I don't recall when I first heard that Vincent Santucci was being appointed as the Interim, or First, Superintendent and going to be coming out as our introductory Superintendent for the Fossil Beds National Monument. But I had heard that name over and over and over again from Lynn Davis from the National Park Conservation Association, and Kathleen Springer and Eric Scott from the San Bernardino County Museum. So I was thrilled that there would be somebody who, I knew from what those people said, was very concerned with the safety of the resource and in this area. A good start.

VS: Great, thanks. So, looking at that period of time when I came aboard as the acting superintendent between March and August of 2015, we do have an interview of me, where a lot of that information is detailed, but are there any things that stand out in your mind that you would like to highlight during that time period when I was the acting superintendent at Tule Springs.

JD: Well, I think the thing that stood out the most in my mind was the understanding and the complexity of all the right-of-way issues that you had to deal with right-of-way that were on the new monument. Obviously, I knew from dealing with this for the past 8 years prior to that, that there was a lot of entities and a lot of right-of-ways involved. But I guess I really didn't understand the complexity of all that. I had been afraid that the Park Service wouldn't want to take on Tule Springs Fossil Beds as a National Monument because of some of those complexities. So, I know you were dealing with that a lot. I think what thrilled all of us the most was how quickly things started to happen. I mean, you were in touch with us right away. You were interested in the scrapbooks and the history and then all of a sudden you showed up to the Last Vegas Science Festival the first weekend of May that year with a banner, with a logo, and stickers, and pins and we just couldn't believe that, "Oh my goodness. Look we already have a logo and we have someone so excited and so thrilled to be part of this journey". So it really, where I had really tamped people down that this was going to be a very slow process, it seemed like things were moving along with lightning speed.

13:42

JD: Somewhere in the late Spring, early Summer was when I got this distinct feeling from Lynn Davis, National Park Service Association, that suddenly the management at Lake Mead was suspicious of Protector's of Tule Springs and that we wanted to continue running the show and we were rushing the National Park Service to do things and we were trying to take over the planning. And I have to tell you that, in the beginning, when I was getting that feeling, it was



hard for me to digest because Lynn and I had been tied at the hips since 2009 when she came into this process. I mean we were like sisters. We talked, every morning at 7 o'clock on the phone as I was driving to work, strategies. My husband, [unclear 14:50] and I, and she socialized on a regular basis outside of the monument efforts. So I was having a hard time figuring out where I had gone wrong in acting like the Protectors was going to take everything over. We had always hoped the National Park Service would take over the agenda and we would be helping to make whatever the agenda was, happen. So there was a lot of confusion for me and a lot of angst over her reporting to me, during that timeframe, that I needed to back off. That the Protectors needed to back off because the Park Service was feeling that we were, like, a hindrance rather than a help. And yet, when I speak to you [Vince], I never felt like that in the least. So that was a confusing time I would say, for me.

VS: Okay, good. I'm glad that you didn't think that I had thought that way at all. Because I had certainly valued every aspect of the things that you brought forth for Tule Springs and—

JD: Yeah, no. I thought we all got along famously and you with everyone on the board. And it was confusing because I didn't understand what that was coming from. Because any time we wanted to do continue our hikes or cleanup we went through you. So, I don't think there was ever a time in the first, well since the monument's been instituted that the Protectors put on a program or a hike or whatever without the Superintendent's knowledge. That feeling that I got was verified years later from people at Lake Mead. That that was rumors that were being circulated with certain people at Lake Mead and Lynn Davis that we were interfering with the plan or we were trying to run the plan. So, you know, it took us actually a couple years to get through that. And I would say that you, Vince, and then Jon Burpee who became the permanent superintendent, were a big part of tamping that down.

VS: Great. Excellent. So, just a couple things during that time period that I was at Tule Springs that I wanted to ask you about. We had talked about interpretive kiosks, do you recall discussion and anything related to kiosks?

JD: Yes. So, of course that was another exciting thing that we could start planning, maybe, areas to inform the public that this is now a National Park Service National Monument. Just that continuing the community outreach was critical as far as I was concerned. We knew we wouldn't have a building for years, if ever. And yet, we had—I felt we had to continue our community outreach and getting more members in order to be able to be the volunteers for the Park Service. Not only with people but with money. In the first few years. So the kiosks were a great idea. And I know that you arranged for the first one and the Protectors, sometime that Summer, embarked on a fundraising plan. And we began to collect money for two additional kiosks. Which ended up, we collected \$20,000 to pay for two additional kiosks and we presented that to the new superintendent, Jon Burpee at our October 2015 meeting.

VS: Great. On a similar vein, do you recall our early discussions about Tule Springs Fossil Bed National Monument signs and can you share any thoughts about the experiences tied with that?

JD: Well that, there you go again. I don't even remember where Sandy and I were one day. I think we had asked you if you wanted to go, or come with us, or meet us or however it happened to what we called the Site Stewardship Site. Where volunteers were actually trained by Kathleen Springer, Eric Scott of the San Bernardino County Museum under a BLM [Bureau of Land

Management] program in this quarry that contained mammoth bones and a tusk. And we were actually shown how paleontologists brush away the dirt. We witnessed a jacketing of fossils et cetera. And so that site had been abandoned for several years and we, I remember Sandy and I, I think, met you at that site that day and then you surprised us with these Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument signs which were then set up at the end of Durango and Aliante Parkway. We have a picture of that, I believe. So that was also very thrilling. Like I said, your whole tenure here was thrilling because we all thought it would be just a wait and see in planning for the future. But it seemed like things were happening almost every week to move the monument forward in people's eyes. And I think it was a very important time.

21:23

VS: So that little gesture of just creating a sign that officially, in National Park Service style, saying, "Tule Springs National Monument" what did that mean to you personally?

JD: Oh it was, oh here I go. No, it was years of work that we really, really did it and it was official. So, I still look at the signs that way and think, "What would this have been if we didn't get it saved?" It would be roads up to the mountains and 7-Elevens on the corner and it would have been all gone. So no, we saved it for the generations that will come after us. And the education for the kids in this valley. You know, there are kids that I taught down in the older part of Las Vegas that will never get a national park site unless it was here in their backyard. And so, that was always our driving force, my driving force, because I had been in so many national parks that I just couldn't imagine these kids not having that experience. And so, we see it every day now and we take groups out. How thrilled they are to have a national park right here in their backyard. And someday when we have visitor centers or areas where kids can go and actually see the tusks that have come out of the ground or fossil sites that have been excavated, I mean that's science in action. And that's science hands-on, get kids away from their desks and to be able to see things in real time makes more sense to them. So this area is just beginning to influence the kids in this valley. And that's always been our goal.

VS: Sure. And there's lot of other things we can chat about. The last one I think for my tenure that I wanted to bring up to you, because you were personally very much involved and so was Erin, was that was the recovery of specimens to bring them back from San Bernardino County Museum to Nevada. So can you tell us your thoughts about that whole experience, your involvement, and what it meant to the people of Las Vegas and the Protectors of Tule Springs?

JD: Well all we ever heard for eight years, one of the very first things I heard from Helen Mortensen and others who had been involved here before I got involved in 2006-7. Was that all of our fossils that were excavated here in Nevada go out of state. We don't have a repository here. And why are we allowing, why is the Bureau of Land Management allowing all of these fossils to go out of state? And I would say any time there was a gathering of people and there was a public official, an elected official, in the room that was brought up. The public was irritated that our resources were being shipped out of state. And of course I understood that if a fossil was excavated it had to be in a federal repository and it had to be in a safe place. But everybody's hope was that those fossils would come back some day to the visitor's center, to an area where the public could interact with them. So the announcement that we would be able to go back and get some of those fossils packed up at the San Bernardino County Museum and bring them back to Las Vegas. All of those fossils that were involved in the Harry Allen transmission

lines. We used to quote all the time that 10,000 fossils came out of 36 power pole holes and yet all of the fossils are there in the San Bernardino County Museum. So people were well aware of that collection and it was exciting to be a part of that, packing them up. And I was impressed, never having done anything like that, with the precision and the paperwork and the skill and accuracy that it took to document every single vial and bone that we had to document to remove it from that repository. And of course, then it came here through arrangements you [Vince] made to the Nevada State Museum that had finally gotten their federal repository status. So the press was of course lots and lots of press on that exciting time. We had the big unveiling of that information at the Nevada State Museum on that July 18<sup>th</sup> that unfortunately I couldn't be at because I was in Germany with my sister. But anyway, that was an exciting period of time. And I think Nevada felt better about that and then soon, a couple years later, the rest of the collection came kind of in a different way but this was the beginning.

VS: One last question about this time period since this was an important transition time period, a brand new National Park Service area transition from the Bureau of Land Management to the National Park Service administration. What are your thoughts about this period in terms of the public and media reaction. How the press portrayed things, the various interviews and things that were conducted during this time period. How would you characterize the general feelings about this new monument outside of Las Vegas?

JD: Oh it was all excitement and positivity. There was never one single group, not one negative, "We shouldn't be doing this here in Las Vegas. We shouldn't be saving this lands". It was all incredibly positive. The press, all along the way, was our friend. And we never, and to this day, would never say anything negative about the Bureau of Land Management. They were great partners all along the way. I had a lot of friends in the Bureau of Land Management from the early years. I think the entire public—and when all the people from Corn Creek and the Horse community showed up at the January 2015 meeting, I was a little like scared maybe that there would be some dissension but I think that NCPA and us had done such a good job of informing and including all of those groups to make sure that they knew what was going on, what the plan was, that there was never a dissension. People were very excited. And again, people didn't understand how long things were going to take. So the fact that there were some significant movement on fossils coming back and a logo being able to be displayed and kiosks going up. I think it was all a very positive time.

29:44

VS: Great. So we'll transition now to the Jon Burpee phase or tenure at Tule Springs Fossil Beds. And so you mentioned the July 18<sup>th</sup> event, you weren't there, but that's the day we were able to surprise the public and introduce the incoming Superintendent Jon Burpee. Even though you weren't there, do you recall any thoughts in your mind about who this new person was and how you were going to be able to work with them and those sorts of things?

JD: Well, yeah. I knew from, again, NCPA and yourself [Vince] I believe, before I left, that this was going to be happening. That I was missing it. And I think you shared all that with me. And I knew that Jon was—let me get this right, I always want to say Bed Fellow but that's not it. A Bevinetto Fellow?

VS: Yes.

JD: How do you pronounce that?

VS: BEV-IN-ETTO. Fellow. Yes.

JD: Okay. I know I always call a Bed Fellow but I know that's obviously not it. But anyway he was on the fast track with the Park Service to be a superintendent. And I knew, from what you [Vince] and Lynn Davis from NCPA had said that he was imminently involved as the legislation was going through the processes in Washington DC and was very interested in being our superintendent because it was a new park and because there was so much community support for this new park. So all signs for me, as far as what I had heard of him, pointed to a great match for our park. And after I met him, soon when he came on, that was all confirmed because he was personable and likeable. He had done his homework on the monument, not only the resources but the people involved and I knew he was going to be a great cheerleader for the monument and contact for the public.

VS: And where and what were the circumstances when you first physically met Jon face to face.

JD: I first met him—and I'm not sure if he called me or if somebody gave me his number and I was able to call him—in the Sun City Aliante Clubhouse he wanted to sit down and go through scrapbook one. Which was amazing to me because I—I mean that was our story, so it was very nice that he wanted to know our history. And I think when people talk to us about the monument they catch the spirit because we love it so much. It's ours. So, he definitely caught the spirit and obviously called himself the Lone Ranger, he was going to be here alone basically for quite a while. I think we got Gordo part-time soon but I can't remember if Gordo started during your tenure, Vince, or Jon's.

VS: Yeah, he started during my tenure.

JD: Okay. Anyway, so I know Jon came—well he was everywhere with us right-of-way. I mean he wanted to go on the hikes with us, he wanted to go the "Get Outdoors Nevada" events in October, he wanted to come to our Protectors meeting in October and that's when we presented the money in October of 2015 for the kiosks. And he was just personable and great every way, everyone absolutely loved him from the beginning. And I got on Lake Mead's bad side again, apparently, because I was so excited that we had our first superintendent with Jon's permission and knowledge I set up a meeting with Senator Reid to be able to go and present the first superintendent of the monument and excitedly share the plans with the person who—really without Senator Reid this monument would never have happened and his skills as senate in the jury leader. And Jon was gracious and wonderful and Senator Reid and I just knew that the monument was in good hands.

35:08

VS: Good to hear. Just clarification, I wanted to mention that you mentioned Gordo. That actually is Gordon Gilbert, he's a law enforcement ranger that worked out of Lake Mead that we were able to bring on board, part-time initially, at Tule Springs Fossil Beds. And the time period that he came on, was shortly after there was a first fatality on Tule Springs.

JD: That's right out at the shooting area, yes?

VS: Correct. I think it was later—

JD: It was a shooting area under the BLM.

VS: Correct. I think that it was initially reported that it was an accidental death and I think later it was reported as suicidal. There was a second fatality on the monument, it was the hang glider that crashed onto the monument. So in a period of two months we had two fatalities at Tule Springs. And so it helped us to convince leadership at Lake Mead that we did need some law enforcement assistance at the monument. So that led to Park Ranger Gordo or Gordon Gilbert starting at Tule Springs and I think he still continues today and he did a really good job.

JD: He's amazing. Absolutely amazing. We all love him today too.

VS: So I wanted to go over the same vein, are there a couple of things that really stand out to you during Jon's tenure that are most memorable to you or were most impactful to the monument?

JD: There's probably so many—well the visit with Senator Reid was certainly and then learning later that he got some blowback from Lake Mead because we didn't go through protocols with letting the PIO know at the time, the Public Information Officer, so he could be briefed. Of course, I didn't know those rules so that was another example I guess of me doing things ahead of Lake Mead and not realizing, ahead of the Park Service and not realizing that I was doing that because I just knew Senator Reid by then pretty well and I thought it would be cool for him to visit. One of the other things that we were getting ready to watch and got superintendent Burpee involved in right-of-way was the plan to have a penny drive in the Clark County School District here in Las Vegas. Now the Clark County School District is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest school district in the country about 330,000 students and we initially thought it would be a great idea. That was actually girl scout gold project that a girl scout had gone out with us on a hike and seen all the trash from the years of misuse that were out on the monument.

JD: And it was her idea for us to have a penny drive in the school system and to not only tell the kids about the monument, the new monument and what we had here in terms of resources, but do it from a viewpoint of what generations in the past were trying to destroy. We, as the future and your pennies, will clean it up for the generations to come. And so that was launched, well then envisioned in Fall of 2015 for Spring 2016 launch, and Jon was very involved in the planning of that. Certainly not in the money end of that and the donations but he was active and we had a film done by PBS here in Las Vegas that was shown in every school in the Clark County School District, all 300 schools of all ages. In the Spring of 2016 and Jon did a great job in explaining to the kids as the actors walk through the monument, what we had here, why it was important, and how they could help to preserve it for the future. So that was a really neat campaign. It took a lot of time but then I know he was so amazing with the kids, not only as he kicked off the campaign by doing some fossil teeth measuring in a 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom, but then afterwards participating in the awards ceremony for the schools who raised the most money. He raised about \$46,000 from that campaign, about one third of the schools participated so it was a huge success. And the whole point of that money was to save up for a clean-up. For clean-up and educational resources for the monument because the monument was starting from scratch. So a clean-up trailer was bought and wrapped with those funds as well as outfitted and equipped. Then the funds kind of sat for a while until they were finally spent this year in total. That was fun.

41:28

JD: Today, Jon told me in Summer of 2017 or Fall that he was leaving was a horrible day. But before we did that, he had been working so hard and I know he spent hours and hours and hours of his time dealing with a section of the monument called the Eglington Preserve. This 300-acres is a riparian waterway that had been under contract between the Bureau of Land Management, and the Army Corp of Engineers, and the Nature Conservancy to preserve, replant, fence, and protect even before the monument was on the books. So once the monument became National Park Service unit it—the contract between Bureau of Land Management, Army Corp of Engineers, and Nature Conservancy was ending. And so I know Jon dealt with a lot of right-of-way issues with Eglington Preserve. He actually saved the monument from being cut in half on Grand Teton because that was a right-of-way road that North Las Vegas could have built, a 6-lane road on. And there was a lot of negotiation that went on with the developer who's building houses south of that land, it was like a 3-way agreement to give up that right-of-way of Grand Teton in exchange for some land on the east part of the monument. Very complex. Too complex for this conversation. But that was a major win for the monument that it would no longer be cut by that highway and we would actually get our first trail put in by the developer of those homes. So that was a significant occurrence during that time.

VS: Very good. Any other final thoughts about Jon Burpee administration at Tule Springs.

JD: No, I'm sure there's tons because—but he was able to hire two—what do you call them? Not temporary rangers. What do you call them? Where they were only here for a year. What's the term you all use?

VS: An acting position?

JD: No. Term-position. Yeah. So a term-position for two rangers. So we got to do a lot more public outreach, a Boy Scout jamborees, the science festival. I have some amazing pictures of Jon who's—I don't know how tall Jon is, 6'4"—down on his knees showing kids the sabretooth skull replica or the mammoth tooth. He loved, loved, loved that's where he wanted to be teaching. The interpreter in him really came out and benefitted the community because that's where he just enjoyed, I think, his job more than anything else was when we could all be out with the public and with the kids. Yeah, we really hated to lose him. That was a hard, hard decision but we all understood for many reasons.

VS: Great, thanks. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to turn over to Erin at the moment to see if she has any questions regarding that period from establishment through the end of Jon Burpee's term. I have a series of thematic questions that I'm going to wait to the absolute end to ask you about that haven't come up yet. So Erin I'm going to go ahead and turn over to you.

EE: Actually I don't have any questions right now, Jill covered everything pretty well.

VS: Okay. So then we will move on to the next superintendent and forgive me, I forget her last name. What was Diane's last name?

JD: Keith.

VS: Keith. Diane Keith. Okay. So do you want to share with us some of the highlights related to Diane's tenure.

JD: Well, I first want to say that after Jon left in December of 2016, in 2017 Diane didn't come on until October of 2017. Which is when we all, we in Protectors, learned the sad reality [audio cuts out].

VS: Jill? We lost you.

JD: —intendents Roxanne Day and then Curt Deuser—

VS: Excuse me. Jill?

JD: Yes?

VS: Jill. We lost you there about 10-15 seconds. Can you—

JD: Oh really? I don't know why my phone's doing that today.

VS: Can you go back and repeat the last minute?

JD: Okay. So after Jon left, in the end of December of 2016 and before Diane Keith came in in October 2017 we had two interim superintendents: Roxanne Day and Curt Deuser, Lake Mead employees. Roxanne, I don't know what her exact job was at that time at Lake Mead, but she was someone we had met before so we were very thrilled that she would take up that spot for the 3 or 4 months that she did. And then Curt Deuser who was in the—I know that he dealt with plants and invasive species for the monument. And so those two people very nicely were our interim superintendents and that's when the Protectors really learned that when there's a change in the command, not much new happens. The monument kind of goes into a period of time where I would venture to say it's like marching in places. Things that were started are continued but nothing really new happens. And that was a tough thing for us because in '15 and '16 there had been so much excitement and new things created by Superintendents Santucci and Burpee.

JD: I first met—so somewhere when Diane Keith was announced in September probably of 2017 we were all very excited that her background was in partnership. Because Protectors knew and what we've already said is, "There has to be more than one partner for this monument". So much was happening with the prior superintendent on right-of-ways and just getting personnel that a lot of the outreach to other groups kind of didn't continue forward as well as maybe it should be. So we felt, when we heard that Diane Keith was in charge of partnership in the Midwest, that it was a perfect time to have this kind of person. We had lots of support for the scientific resources not only from you Vince but Kathleen Springer and Eric Scott were still very involved with the monument because they put their heart and soul into it as well. So the science, we felt, we didn't need a paleontologist to be a superintendent we needed the cheerleader, the person to go out and interact with the public. And to find and build more partnership with the public at large.

JD: So I first met Diane and I remember by then was that Richardson was the superintendent of Lake Mead, the SCIS, I believe she came in just after Jon Burpee began. And she and Marie [unclear] the chairman of the advisory council was involved in hiring Diane. So I remember I got a strange phone call, or email, or conversation with Roxanne, who I didn't talk to a whole lot at

the time, that, you know, “Protectors should just relax and let Diane get thoroughly settled. She had to move here from the Midwest and to not like attack her all at once with things to do. So give her some time to get settled”. And I thought that was very strange because I never thought I put any huge demands on anyone else who came in before her. So that was kind of surprising and I agreed that, “Yes. Just let us know. We’ll at least give her 30 to 90 to get settled”. And I was like, “Okay”. So the first time I met Diane was in October of 2017 at Get Outdoors Nevada Day. We had a booth there and the interagency booth with Lake Mead personnel in it was actually right behind us. Was that Richardson brought Diane Keith to that event and introduced her to us. So we all, whoever was in the booth at the time, greeted her warmly, welcomed her, and we were off and running with a new superintendent.

VS: Okay. Very good. Do you want to provide any other highlights, achievements, or observations during Diane’s tenure?

JD: Well, okay. So basically, nothing really was going on. I had occasional conversations with Daine for the first 2 or 3 months. I had told her that Jon and I had regularly scheduled phone conversations, like once a week, at an agreed to a time to kind of catch up on things he was doing and things we hoped to do or, “Would be okay if—” and I would love to continue that with her. She did not want to do regular phone conversations. Finally, I said well there’s just so much going on and things we need to ask you, you know, about hikes and when we can have clean-ups, and just kind of continuing the momentum we built. She finally agreed to monthly, in-person meetings but starting in the 1st of 2018. So those first 2 or 3 months of course were the holidays and I think our hikes were over by the time she came or at least the last one or two were scheduled, we were doing. We invited her to go along with us on hikes which she declined. There was no hint of this excitement, happy to be here, partnership. It was, I was just trying to give it some time because everyone handles moves and change differently and I knew there was huge learning curve that would have to go on just to get familiar with the resources, the people at Lake Mead, the other people that were still involved around the monument like the BLM and National Parks Conservation Association, and some other people. I told her that we still were very much in contact with the congressional delegation and good friends with the mayor of North Las Vegas and the city council people and that at any time that she wanted me to introduce her or make introductions just let me know. So I can’t say that at the beginning of 2018, I think we had one meeting in the first 3 months and basically it was to garner permission to continue to do our hikes. Protectors conducted 3 or 4 hikes in the Spring and Summer that had been vetted by Kathleen Springer and Eric Scott to bring members of the public not to fossil sites but out to areas in the monument where he had been taking people since 2007.

56:05

JD: Somewhere she had been here about 6 months and I was invited to lunch by Superintendent Liz Richardson to talk about what was happening on the monument. And it became obvious to me that we had a problem. That Superintendent Keith was not getting acclimated to the nuances of the monument and the right-of-ways and was spending a lot of time, I think was that Richardson felt, spinning her wheels over questions that could easily be answered not only by NPS staff but maybe by me. Because when it came to borders and why something on the monument was set up the way it was, I mean, one phone call to me could usually clear it up. Where there had been disputes or—I’m trying to think of a specific thing but like right-of-way issues or there’s a 44-acre inholding off of Moccasin just below the park county shooting range,



west of Decatur. That if there was a question about that, [unclear] and I had the history on that and of course, ready to share and educate.

JD: So there was really no interest from Diane in learning about Protectors or where we had come from or why we were so involved and cared. And throughout the next—her whole 2 year thing she became really resentful because as Richardson and I got closer in terms of managing the monument and Diane was feeling very—well that I was undermining her which was not my intention. But as I once said to my board, we were not going to just sit around and lose all the community support and the momentum and the excitement from our volunteers that we had garnered all these years and that had been garnered in 2016 and 2017 when the Park Service became on board. There was also a couple instances where she basically told 2 of our volunteers who had put it in writing that we should just close down the monument because the Park Service didn't have the money to manage the influx of people who were just going out there walking around. And it was just too dangerous and we should close it off. Well that is like the last thing that anyone, A. should say to one of my volunteers and B. for me to hear. Because we worked too hard to share this with people. That was the whole point. And we had volunteers all the time. If there was an area of concern than all someone had to do was share it with us. If there was an area of the monument where we needed more volunteers blocking and just observing and just making sure that it was okay. That was something we could help with.

59:52

JD: At one point, towards the end of her tenure, she left in December of 2019 or closely thereafter. It was actually just before the 5-year anniversary celebration of the monument, she said to me personally, "I hope you're happy that you preserved this land. Because in 10 years from now it's going to be nothing but a pain in the neck of the Park Service". Obviously by then our relationship had deteriorated to the point of hardly speaking and that was just a knife. And I said, "Of course I'll be happy that we preserved this land. And it's too bad that you never loved it the way we did". And that was basically it. It was 2 years of no partnership building. In fact almost trying to destroy the partnership of the Protectors that had been so valuable. It was 2 years of not meeting with community leaders such as the elected officials. Made an appointment to meet with Congressman Horsford personally and Diane was 45 minutes late to that meeting. I didn't know that she had a meeting him and it was kind of interesting that I had a meeting with him about 2 hours after that. And he was extremely angry that she was late for that meeting. I didn't understand and I still don't. I do not understand how you can be a partnership coordinator and then almost singlehandedly destroy the partnerships that were made after all these years. I will never understand it. (long pause) I think I've said enough.

VS: Really appreciate your candidness and willingness to share that. I know that you probably have a lot more you can say and are trying to be courteous and polite in terms of a formal interview with the Park Service. I will stand up and say that I agree with you 100 percent that everyone I spoke with in regards to that tenure of that superintendent was either a failure or a vacancy and so whatever it's worth thank you for sharing that. I think people down the road, historically, might want to look back and know there was a lapse in competency during her tenure. Certainly overshadowed by the good work of Jon Burpee before and the current Superintendent Derek Carter afterwards. And I also want to give tremendous credit—this is going to be one of my last questions for you will be in regards to Erin—because it's Erin that's

been the consistency in setting the bar high to help get through the transition with Diane. If it wasn't for Erin, Tule Springs—

JD: Well if it wasn't for Erin—Erin, when did you actually become an employee? What was the date?

EE: It was June 2018.

JD: Okay. So Erin brought us hope. She came in in about halfway through I guess, a little less. But Protectors loved working with Erin. And we knew that something was going on with the resource management and studies. Those volunteers who went out in the monument and could help Erin with things were very happy and very satisfied during those years. It was other volunteers that kind of were lacking in terms of having a superintendent, I think she came to one Protectors meeting during that whole time where Jon was at all of them during his tenure. So her public persona—but Erin, I mean, I can't say enough about Erin and there's not enough—she works on a 48-hour day instead of 24-hour. I don't know how she does it. So Erin was the bright light. But of course, we couldn't talk to Erin about it. She was a Park Service employee that worked for Diane Keith, there was no way I could share all of my frustrations. I think at times, she definitely knew how frustrated I was but yes, Erin was the bright light during that last year of Diane's superintendency.

VS: Thank you for that. So Erin, I'm going to ask you if you have anything to add and certainly don't feel compelled to but if you have anything to say please go ahead.

EE: I don't really have a lot more to add because what Jill said I mean, I did kind of understand their frustration when I came in. And so, I tried everything that I could to work with POTS [Protectors of Tule Springs] to keep the ball rolling on the excitement on protecting the natural resources and find ways that POTS could help the park propel forward and get some things done. So I appreciate everything that POTS did because basically when I came on in my position they were the ones that were giving me the orientation on the monument and filling me and giving me ideas of what different projects we could do. So I appreciate that Jill.

JD: Well and of course I should say that because of Erin's nomination, Protectors was awarded the Hartzog Award for volunteer organizations a year for Park Service in 2019. Erin and I and Sandy Croteau went back to Washington DC to accept that award and had a great time together. Diane basically stayed out of it. I think by then she knew that between her boss Lizette Richardson and the support the Protectors had from other people in the Park Service such as Ray Murray, the partnership coordinator in the Western Region, and Vince Santucci and Erin that I don't think she ever didn't—did anything to undermine that nomination. So we certainly appreciated that. We sure had fun in Washington DC, didn't we? (laughs)

VS: Absolutely. Thank you. Okay so with Diane's departure, there was an opportunity to really work hard and see if we can bring in a superintendent to put out the fires and pick up where Jon had left off and to support Protector's vision to help Erin achieve the goals that were set forth for this place.

JD: Right.

VS: So do you want to go ahead and give us some highlights relative to Derek Carter the current superintendent at Tule Springs?

JD: Yes. So I was actually thrilled, so somewhere along the line there was a lot of changing going on at Lake Mead at the beginning of 2019. And again, here we were with an interim superintendent, Lila Cline, which was great. During the first half of 2019, while the superintendent search went on—and one thing I have to say to anybody from the Park Service listening to this in the future years, I hope you all have changed your policy on putting brand new superintendents on brand new monuments that require a ton of work and people are trying to, because they are paid less than people on other bigger parks the turnover is extreme. Because the last thing a brand new park needs is all this turnover. So for the first 6 months, 5 or 6 months, of course, there was the search for a new superintendent and at that same time, Lizette Richardson retired as the superintendent of Lake Mead and a lady named Margaret Goodro came on. So that was at the end of 2018 when Margaret came on. So Diane actually left during Margaret Goodro's tenure.

1:10:06

JD: So I was thrilled to get some information on Derek Carter ahead of time. I was thrilled that he was the head administrator at Lassen Volcanic National Park because now I realized how important having someone who knew how to get things done administratively. How important that would be to the park. By now we have Erin who is handling the resources. We were hopeful to get some help on the interpretive side eventually. And as long as Protectors could do some educational outreach, we felt that was pretty well covered for now. But what was obvious was during Diane's tenure was the administrative side of the house was totally lacking. So having someone like Derek who knew the people at Region and how we get questions answered, I thought was a very good match for the park. I was also fortunate that Margaret Goodro allowed me to talk to Derek before he was hired to get my impression. I was amazed at that. And Derek and I had a really engaging conversation. He asked all the right questions. He was so excited to be here in Las Vegas. I had asked Margaret at the time of, when they were getting the hiring process, that she would bring the final one or two out here to Las Vegas to see the park prior to offering the job because we felt that was one of the real problems with Diane Keith. She had not seen the park. And I think she hated Las Vegas and the park from the minute she saw it. So I really wanted the person who was going to take the next superintendent job to know what they were getting into. To see how encroached upon this park is by the urban poor and understand that there's different pressures here than there is on Lassen Volcanic National Park in the middle of nowhere. That there's not only is the community right on top of the monument border but the people are involved. The people made this park and they want to be part of it. So you're going to get those pressures from all sides in that regard.

JD: And so from the minute Derek showed up—and we just celebrated on Facebook his 1-year anniversary of being here on June 6<sup>th</sup>. So he showed up June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and engaged with us immediately. I mean, it was like we were going back to the Jon Burpee days right away. He could hardly wait to meet everybody and it was a whole breath of fresh air. We finally felt like we were back on board and he's an excellent administrator. When he doesn't have the answer to something he finds it. He has calendar reminders. Nothing has slipped through the crack that I'm aware of in the year that he's been here. He speaks well in front of people. He wanted to go meet the mayor of North Las Vegas right away. We had a meeting with the whole North Las Vegas

management team. So I have nothing but positive things to say about Derek just overall. I mean, he's totally engaged with us and the public and my biggest problem is how to keep him here because he is definitely an up-and-comer in the Park Service. I joke with people that I need to find him a significant other here in Las Vegas who doesn't want to leave Las Vegas so that he'll have to stay here rather than moving on. (Santucci laughs). My goal in life. So I have nothing but positive things to say. Even when Covid hit. Even with the pandemic hit him. And I misspoke, he came in in—my times are all off. He came in—my times are all off. He came in last June, during Covid right. Erin?

EE: That's correct.

JD: Yes. So in June of 2020 right. I mean anybody could have come in during Covid and said, "Oh we can't do this and we can't do that. And I can't—". And no. We were having Zoom calls and he met with Cortez Masto [1:15:46] staff via Zoom. And he's just hit the ground running so it's been a pleasure.

VS: Yeah, absolutely. He has worked out tremendously well. I couldn't imagine a better team than Derek and Erin to manage Tule Springs.

JD: That's right. And well then Lauren, Lauren—

EE: Perry.

JD: Thank you. Lauren Perry who's our Geoscientist in the Park has been amazing and we had Esmerelda on the team also and we're getting more and more employees. Gordon Gilbert is still our law enforcement ranger. There was horrible rumours that he might retire during the Diane Keith administration and I'm so thankful he did not. So, no. Everything's coming up roses. And like I said, if I can figure out a way to keep Derek here—otherwise I'm so fearful of the next time we have to go through a search process.

VS: Great, thanks. Erin, any follow-up questions or thoughts regarding Derek's tenure?

EE: No, I can't think of anything right now.

VS: Okay. Very good.

JD: I'm the only one that makes her speechless. (laughter)

EE: You're so thorough, Jill.

VS: You are. Very good. You make it easy to interview you. So I have 6 or 7 topics—

JD: Okay good.

VS: —things that we only briefly touched upon that are probably worth a little more investment of time.

JD: Yes and I forgot something major during Jon Burpee's era but go ahead.

VS: So let's start off, in general and you touched upon it throughout both of the interviews, can you give us some general thoughts about the Protectors of Tule Springs and your interaction with

the various scientists that have worked at the monument even prior to the monument being established?

JD: Oh sure. I mean, almost immediately—and our first meeting in January of 2007 when Helen Mortensen came running in at the end with all her scientific research. We met right away with Dr. Steve Rowland from UNLV [University of Nevada, Las Vegas] and had him at one of our meetings and we started educating ourselves more and more and more towards the monument resources. And early on, I don't remember when, we were introduced by the Bureau of Land Management to Kathleen Springer and Eric Scott from the San Bernardino County Museum that had a contract with Bureau of Land Management to not only identify a fossil site out on the monument but to quite a bit of excavation of sites that were in danger of being discovered by the public and possibly lost. And Kathleen and Eric were amazing to share with us their knowledge, to include Protectors on hikes, to come with us on our hikes to make sure that even though we certainly did not go deeply into scientific facts on our hikes that what we were saying was accurate and true. We just learned so much from them. And of course they were at the meeting in January 2008 with Senator Reid and Kathleen was with me in the meeting in December of 2008 with Senator Reid's staff to express the important of carrying this monument out past Corn Creek.

JD: So they were as open with us as they could be during the Bureau of Land Management days. Obviously they were being paid and in contract with the Bureau of Land Management so there were some things they could not share with us. But it's been a great partnership I think and obviously the importance of the resources had to be presented to the elected officials and the public by the scientists. I am just a layman so still, we're all great friends since then and they did all come in to the December 16<sup>th</sup> celebration all the way from California where they both lived at the time. So it's been a great relationship.

VS: Another topic and you have touched upon this but I wanted to revisit it since you did work as an educator. In terms of educational outreach to the community related to Tule Springs can you share with us a little bit about things that have really worked and have been successful.

1:21:20

JD: Well, again, it's been on and off with just having term interpreters for the Park Service. The majority of the time it has been left to the Protectors of Tule Springs. And we man tables at all major events here in the valley and have since 2007. In the beginning we used those educational outreach like at the Las Vegas Science Festival and the first weekend in May generates between 10 and 16,000 members of the public, mostly families because it's a free event. So lots of outreach like that Protectors basically did. If the Park Service had an interpreter or staff at that time, they certainly participated with us but the educational outreach has kind of overall been left to Protectors. Now there have been since Lauren has come on board she has done a lot of educational outreach this last year in the Clark County School District and we definitely need more of a formal educational outreach plan for the district. Since we did the Mammoth Penny Push back in 2016 and '17 that's definitely been lacking and some of that is because the Clark County School District, along with every school district in the country, has been pushing for standards based lessons. And we have not had a lesson plan for focusing on monument resources aligned to the Clark County standards to be able to go into middle and high schools and teach a unit. Or even have the teacher teach the unit. We just have not had that material. So luckily, this

summer, Protectors have funded a Teacher-Ranger teacher position for Tule Springs where, and he has just started, he's a teacher with the Clark County School District in the science field. Where he will be writing a standard, big lesson plan focused on the monument for our Clark County schools. So that actual, in the classroom outreach has been lacking but I really think now will be able to get to it and get it done so that's great.

VS: In conjunction with the National Park Centennial, Director Jon Jarvis the previous National Park Service director, pushed forth this idea that general management planning was a very expensive, time consuming undertaking. And so they pushed forward this idea, where they developed an idea called foundation documents, they're mini planning efforts. I know you were involved in the creation of the foundation document for Tule Springs. Can you share your thoughts on your involvement in the process?

JD: Yes, as a member of the advisory council I represent the city of Las Vegas on the advisory council that was established by the legislation. I was invited to be part of the foundation document planning and it was a great experience. It was the people who came from Region—I think they were regional personnel, they may have been national personnel—who conducted the 3 days of [unclear] and planning drew out of a group including the scientists, Eric Scott and Kathleen Springer, and people from different departments in Lake Mead as well as that was one of the things I forgot in Jon Burpee's tenure. It was fascinating how they put a plan like that together by utilizing the people in the room to get what's important about this place on paper because the people who are conducting the [unclear] don't know Tule Springs the way everyone else in that room did. So that was a fascinating process. It was very satisfying. Of course, I was in tears have the time as usual. And I was pleased to be a part of it. It took a long time after that fact. We did a lot of wordsmithing, I call it, arguing over words during that 3-day process and I know that went on for the couple years after that before the foundation document was actually completed and introduced. It's just something I'll always cherish having because I love to work at it and look at what we got. And I know the general management plan will be starting in the year 2022. So in October of 2021 we will be able to, the advisory council and the public, will begin that process and I'm sure the [unclear] will be similar as far as now I know they don't do an overall general management plan but doing the piece parts of a plan that we really need to hear in Las Vegas.

VS: Thanks. The many dimensions of Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument there's more than just fossils. There's modern flora and fauna, there's the relationships with the Native people, the Indigenous people, there's the right-of-ways. The littering and the trash that has accumulated across the monument, I know has been something of a real challenge to deal with. Can you share some thoughts about the first clean-up back in 2015 I think it was at Aliante and Horse?

JD: It was.

VS: Can you share some thoughts on that first clean-up and what that meant?

JD: Again, that's one of the things during your tenure that all of a sudden happened. I mean, we didn't think there'd be a formal clean-up and organization such as that so early and my goodness, that was early on after you came in. I thinking that Spring. And just everybody standing at the end of Aliante Parkway and Horse Drive by the Tule Springs Fossil Bed sign down there and all

of us in our vests and I think mainly during that clean-up we didn't have a formal clean-up trailer, I'm sure Lake Mead had the equipment for us. It was the beginning of what ended up being by the end of 2018, removing 400 tons of trash out of the monument. So it really was the first show to the public that the Park Service cared and we were going to clean up this place and not let it be an eyesore anymore.

VS: I want to extend a lot of credit to Nancy Bernard who was the volunteer coordinator who helped to coordinate the volunteer clean-up. And I thought one of the great aspects of that was to engage some of the Air Force staff locally who really brought some muscle and energy and enthusiasm to that whole effort.

JD: Well and they continue to.

VS: Yes.

JD: We just had a native plant restoration project at the Aliante kiosk actually a few months ago. And the Air Force sent 12 airmen to dig the 90 holes with the augers that we needed to plant the plants and they sent the next week more volunteers. And they continue to remain engaged because they were part of getting the monument establish and they want to be part of the solution as well. So that has been great because I would say, probably, 60 or 70% of the Protectors of Tule Springs are senior citizens so digging 90 holes in our desert concrete is not exactly in our wheel house. So it was wonderful to have all their help. Always.

VS: The legislation for establishing Tule Springs mandated that an advisory council be established. Can you share with us your thoughts about the advisory council, your participation, and why it succeeds and/or why it hasn't succeeded?

1:31:25

JD: Well that's a hard one. I guess part, I mean the advisory council since its inception has felt like there's not much for us to do. During Jon Burpee's tenure and I learned way after the fact that there was kind of dissention at Lake Mead with Superintendent Richardson that because the general management planning process money was going to be so delayed it was almost like we were just marching in place and meeting for updates of what the superintendent was doing but not really having an active role. And certainly in the Diane Keith era there was no role for the advisory council to play. Many, many members were very frustrated by this. Some of that time, between the Obama administration leaving and the new Trump administration taking over, there was a period of 18 months where the advisory councils were shut down nationwide. We couldn't even meet. So of the 6 years, the initial first 6 years of the monument time, it probably took, I don't remember exactly but 15 months to get an advisory council in place and passed through the Secretary of the Interior and 18 months of that 6 years we were not allowed to meet. And then we had a superintendent who didn't have anything for us to do. So it was very frustrating.

JD: But I have to say, in the short time Derek's been here, again, we've only had a Zoom advisory council meetings but we set up a timeline for advisory council members got on committees and 3 of us submitted plans to the Park Service for beautification of Aliante kiosk and like I said, that has happened along with a placement of a temporary trail for people to use. And very soon one of the home builders in their area is paving a parking lot in that area. And there are other improvements, another group of advisory council members have taken care of the

end of Durango area. The city of Las Vegas has put in I don't know 50, 60 parking places and there will be a temporary trail there as well with some beautification. So the advisory council finally had something to do which was included other partners and the city with both cities, of North Las Vegas and Las Vegas, as well as partners in the community such as Lenara [1:35:00] Hops. So that's been very valuable and now we are at another kind of pause because of the change of administration. So the advisory council has not met since last Fall and will not be able to meet now, I think, the next hopeful day is August. Because the new administration it's getting the Department of the Interior jobs filled and we had new advisory council members coming in. There had to be an extension of the advisory council so it's kind of been a technical on hold. But we hope when the general management planning starts in October that we will have, finally, a really vital role to play.

VS: Thank you. Another big topic, and we're getting down to the last few topics here, but this is a really important and rather complex one. The relationship between the Nevada and Nevada State Parks and the National Park Service, can you share with us some thoughts in terms of where we are? Why we have a state park and why we have a state park visitor center that's opening?

JD: Oh wow. Yes, I guess so. The totally surrounded by the monument is 315-acres of state land east of Decatur across the street from the Shadowridge high school football field. And that land back in the early 2000s, North Las Vegas was actually thought it was Bureau of Land Management land and they had a developer who wanted to build condominiums and a golf course there. And that's when somebody found out it was 315-acres of state land so the state started getting interested in it about the time that we started advocating for a national monument. So Helen Mortensen whose husband, Harry, was on the state legislature was always very well connected and speaking to the governors of Nevada about her dream of having an Ice Age park. And of course that was part of our vision overall.

1:37:40

JD: My vision and Protector's vision has always been that the state and the National Park Service should work as a partner to make it a seamless visitor experience. Because obviously we are interpreting the same resources and history and et cetera. On the state land is some, not all, but 315-acres of the 1000-acre national register site that documents the 1962-1963 Big Dig Tule Springs expedition. So it tells a part of the story and it tells a lot of the story but it's a part of the entire 22,650 acres story. So my dream was for everybody after the legislation passed to kind of just march in place so the Park Service, when they began their planning process, would work with the state so that we would have a seamless visitor experience. Well as politics usually does happen—I can't exactly remember when Governor Brian Sandoval was in office. There was a huge donation of land in the northern part of Nevada for a state park that was made. And it was Governor Sandoval's feeling that if they gave a big new state park officially to northern Nevada he needed to give one to southern Nevada. And of course he had been hearing about Tule Springs for years and so he waved his magic wand and suddenly we had the Ice Age Fossils State Park. 315-acres here in the southern part of the state with the command that, "Here's 2 million dollars and I want a building built and a visitor's center and get going". Obviously with 2 employees that wasn't going to happen with 2 million dollars building a whole new building but a supervisor was put in place as well as an interpreter and they got—I mean Garrett Fehner who is their supervisor got grants and funds and as of right now, the visitor's center is nearing



completion. The inside displays is almost completed. The plan is it's going to be a phenomenal small but mighty building.

JD: So this partnership that we had hoped would happen the state park does have an office within the new visitor's center for the National Park Service but, again, here we go during the Diane Keith years the state parks could not get the National Park Service through Diane Keith to help with, encourage, finalize any plans to be a help to the state parks getting off the ground. Protectors expect to be the volunteers in that visitor's center still with very few employees I think it's going to have an amazing amount of visitation and they'll need a lot of help. Since Derek came in, Derek Carter a year ago, the partnership with state parks and National Park Service has strengthened. Vince, you had a lot to do with it when you met with them during—I don't know if it was during the interim between Diane and Derek, I believe it was—in getting that relationship back on track. But as with any partnership, there are some bumps in the road. Derek Carter's having a hard time getting the MOUs [Memorandum of Understanding] done with state parks because Garrett Fehner is so busy with the building. There's some dissatisfaction from supervisor Fehner with having the kiosks so close to Aliante Parkway to state park's land even though the temporary trail heads east and totally away from state parks so there's still a lot of discussions that need to happen to strengthen that partnership and we'll just see where it goes. You know, I'm not privy to all those conversations so it's, I only hear things superficially on the outside and things said to me like, "Why did we put a kiosk up? Why didn't you guys put a kiosk up on Aliante Parkway?" And the truth is we put it there because the people of Sun City Aliante paid for it. Basically through Protectors and wanted it there. I think that's why it was there. So anyway, it's causing a problem now but I'm sure we'll get through it. [long pause] Is that what you wanted to hear?

1:43:37

VS: Yeah, thanks. That was great. So during our first interview, we talked a little bit about the Protectors of Tule Springs and their original mission and how it may have evolved over time. Once the monument was officially signed into law in 2014, did the mission of the Protectors of Tule Springs change at all? And has it changed and evolved over the years or what is the current status of the mission?

JD: The mission didn't change when the park was legislated because it was always focused on interpretation, education, and support of the National Park Service. But now in the last 6 months we have changed the mission to include state parks so that our mission does include supporting both parks. If we were going to spend the time to have volunteers going there and because it looked like the National Park Service and the State Parks were going to be good partners and then we decided to change it to include both. So our mission basically still revolves around educating and supporting both parks, educating the public in both parks.

VS: Very good. Erin do you have anything at this point?

EE: Jill, I don't know if you want to talk about the Eglington Preserve management plan that we were trying to establish. I don't know if you have anything else to add about that.

JD: Yeah, well the Eglington because there was a huge chunk of money about 3 million dollars given from—and I don't know, Erin what's the exact word of the programs of the Army Corp of

Engineers that collects money from developers who are interrupting waterways and so the Eglington fund was established.

EE: It was the [unclear 1:46:06]

JD: Yeah, there you go, it was the [unclear 1:46:09] funds. With 3 million dollars, so the Nature Conservancy managed for the Bureau of Land Management and the Army Corp and did a lot of work on that 300 acres. So now that agreement is not only over but null and void because the Bureau of Land Management does not manage that land, the Protector's has been working with the Nature Conservancy and the Park Service since 2017—'18?—3 years, about the time superintendent Keith came on, to be the non-profit. The money has to be transferred to a non-profit to manage those funds to take care of Eglington. Originally it was a fund to be spent. But then in 2018 I was told the Army Corps wanted it to be more like an endowment that would fund things in the Eglington in perpetuate. But with the way the economy is right now, there's 1 million dollars left in that fund. It would only fund about \$30-40,000 a year and the Eglington is about ready to be bombarded with 8600 homes built around its southern and western border. And it's our feeling and superintendent Carter's feeling that the money might be better to go back to a fund that we can use as the public incursion on the land takes a play and we need more money upfront to strengthen fencing and establish entrances and those kinds of protections for that land now rather than having it be a little bit of money every year that's really not going to pay for much fencing or things.

JD: So that is, now the National Park Service through superintendent Carter and the Nature Conservancy have both given their blessing to the Army Corps of Engineers that the Protector's of Tule Springs will be the non-profit to manage this money. We've presented every document that we've been asked for financially planning-wise and otherwise and it would be going, obviously, to a financial planning company Merrill Lynch and US Trust to manage those funds for us for the use on the Eglington. So it's still to be determined if it will be a non-wasting fund or a fund for use as the Park Service needs it.

1:49:32

VS: Anything else, Erin?

EE: Nope that was it.

VS: I have one more question that I will save for the end. Jill is there anything we forgot to discuss that you'd like to share with us.

JD: Yeah, one of the major things during Jon Burpee's days that I totally forgot was the partnership agreement. Because of the Mammoth Penny Push was going to generate all these funds and we've never had a formal partnership plan because we were all, it was a new park so this was a new relationship, Jon was very instrumental in working with Region in getting partnership documents drawn up. And we signed at the end of Decatur with the beautiful—oh, Decatur, excuse me, at the end of Durango—with the beautiful mountains and monument behind us on a day in 2016 out there. It was just a gorgeous, gorgeous day. So we were able to raise funds now like from the Mammoth Penny Push and from other efforts and from the kiosk funds so that we could monetarily support the monument. Those partnership documents have now changed as the National Park Service put into place all new documents in 2000 and—let me see,

let me get my dates straight here—2019 those documents were more extensive and totally redone in the Spring of 2019 to solidify the partnership. That was it.

VS: Great. Wonderful interview, of course, you make it easy as I mentioned before to interview because you live and breathe Tule Springs so you can articulate it back to us very well. Thanks for interviewing. So while we've got you on tape, I just want you to finally promise us that you're going to produce (DeStefano laughs) a book on Tule Springs Fossil Beds, the history of it's preservation. This is your opportunity and we want to make sure we document it at the end of this so we can hold it against you (laughs).

JD: Oh great. Are you going to sue me or something if I don't? (laughs)

VS: No, huh-uh.

JD: Yes, I will work on it in my old age which I'm not there yet. I do want to tell people though, and the scrapbooks are a great history. Both of them. And at the end of the second scrapbook is kind of my word to anybody who gets through the two of them, what this meant to all of us (voice getting teary). This is for the kids, for the future generations. This isn't for us old people at all. And I say that for me, not you Erin. (laughs) It's been an amazing experience, I'll tell you.

VS: You've touched a lot of lives, a lot of people, and I know that you mean the world to Erin and myself and so thanks again for taking the time to interview.

JD: Thank you, Vince. We need to have a fieldtrip to Pearl Harbor to (Santucci laughs) bug Jon when he's the interim superintendent out there.

VS: And we have to find some fossils because the park's not on our list yet.

JD: Well certainly there's got to be some.

VS: Erin were you going to say something?

EE: Jill I just wanted to thank you and POTS for your passion and your drive to protect Tule Springs Fossil Beds and you definitely are an inspiration to make me want to work harder to protect the area. And also the same thing goes for Vince and Jon and everybody that [unclear].

JD: Well thank you. We're lucky to have you. I'm glad that you don't want to leave Las Vegas so hopefully we won't be thinking of replacing you in the next 40 years or so.

EE: Nope, I'm hooked.

JD: (laughs) Good.

VS: Well I'm going to go ahead and shut off the recording and if you could go ahead and hang on for another second.

[END OF INTERVIEW]



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