



National Park Service Paleontology Program

Oral History Interview – Lynn Davis

Natural Resource Report NPS/PALEONTOLOGY PROGRAM/OHI—2020/005



ON THE COVER

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Background

This interview was conducted by Erin Eichenberg over the telephone with Lynn Davis, former Senior Program Manager in Las Vegas for the National Parks Conservation Association, from her home in Rockville, Maryland. At the time of the interview, Erin Eichenberg was the Integrated Resources Program Manager at Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument. The interview was recorded on a digital audio recorder and a mp3 file was created. A written transcription of the interview was produced by volunteer R. Sky McClain from the digital audio recording and this document contains the discussion during the interview. Lynn Davis signed a release form for the National Park Service for the preservation and use of the interview in the future. PII has been omitted.

Transcript

2:38:18

[START OF INTERVIEW]

EE: Today is Tuesday, December 15, 2020. My name is Erin Eichenberg (EE) and I'm the Integrated Resources Program Manager for Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument. Today we are interviewing Lynn Davis (LD) who served as Senior Program Manager in Las Vegas for the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA). The interview is being conducted over the telephone with Lynn Davis from her home in Rockville, Maryland. We are joined today on the phone by Vincent Santucci (VS), a former Superintendent at Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument, Jon Burpee (JB), also a former Superintendent at Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument, and Jill DeStefano (JD), President and one of the founders of Protectors of Tule Spring. So welcome, Lynn.

LD: Thank you.

VS: So, Lynn this is Vince. First of all we wanted to thank you for being part of this interview process. You're probably as well aware as any of us that in addition to the paleontology and the geology of Tule Springs there's a tremendous history associated with the Monument. And one of the projects that Jill and Erin and myself have been involved with is trying to capture as much of that history as possible. Of the human history through archival research and through these interviews. Your name has come up so many times. Just about everybody who was intimately involved in this project reference you and the tremendous work you have put forth to make this Monument happen. There's a few key individuals and you are certainly one of them. Jill points that out to us all the time. These interviews would not be complete if we didn't have you as part of it. So, we are greatly indebted to you for that. I'm personally indebted to you because of the work you did pre-Monument to make this happen. From the first time that I met you at the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology meeting in Las Vegas all the way up through the time that I was there as an Acting Superintendent at Tule Springs you were so helpful. You had a strategic vision. You paved the way to introduce me to a lot of key individuals and you're extremely strategic in terms of how you help to develop this truly remarkable conservation story associated with the preservation of a paleontological site. Thank you again for being a part of this interview and allowing us to preserve the history that you contributed to make this particular fossil park possible. Thank you.

LD: Well, thank you. It is my delight today and it was my absolute pleasure then. So, I'm looking forward to this.

EE: Great. Lynn let's get to know you a little bit more. The first question is when and where were you born? And also where did you grow up and go to school?

LD: I was born in Michigan. My father had just graduated from Michigan State and went to work for the US Forest Service as a forest ranger. I grew up in several places in the west, in Bend, Oregon. I lived on Mt. Hood outside of Portland, below Jackson Hole in Wyoming and eventually ended up in Ogden, Utah where the Forest Service has their Regional Office. I went to the University of Utah.

EE: Great. When did you go to work for National Park Conservation Association (NPCA)?

LD: I started working for them in 2008. NPCA opened an office in Nevada in 2008 and I was the one woman show in that office until February 2017.

EE: What was the purpose for opening a Las Vegas office? Do you know?

LD: Yes. The office was opened to honor a request that Senator Harry Reid had made. He was then Senate Majority Leader and an exceptional conservation leader across the country and across issues. When NPCA's VP of conservation, Craig Obey met with Senator Reid in late 2007 to talk about some issues Craig thanked him for all of his support and asked him what NPCA could do. Senator Reid responded, from what I've been told, immediately and said, "Open a Nevada office." The Senator really at that time wanted support and help in closing down Reid Gardner, no relationship to Reid, a coal fired power plant. And then stopping three very eminent coal fired power plant proposals. And that is something I'm proud to say was accomplished by NPCA and a number of conservation groups over the years. In fact I think Reid Gardner closed down last year, in 2019. So, it was a process. Anyway, I had been working with National Parks for more than a decade as a consultant and I decided I wanted to get into more advocacy issues. I'd been doing mostly communication consulting. So, I traveled to D.C. in January 2008 to meet with NPCA regarding this position in relationship to the National Parks upcoming Centennial. This opportunity emerged. I was asked if I would stay in Vegas and run the new office.

EE: Great, thanks for all that background. When did you first hear the effort to convey the land that is now known as TUSK or Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument?

LD: So if I can just go back just a little bit. I want to set the timing of it and the serendipitous part of it which I believe is part of Tule Spring's history. In 2008 there was a very evident downturn in the economy. There was certainly the timing of the BLM going through the process of auctioning off this 13,000 acres in the area of Tule Springs. Putting that land in disposal for development. There was the timing of Jill and her neighbors uniting in finding out what was in the area. And realizing there was a very significant value to the land. Certainly the timing of developers stalling and actually stopping their plan. Then there were a couple of other things. There was obviously some timing in a national group of parks related group coming in to assist Jill and her group. But there was the timing of what's called the Second Century Report, which was a report that was pulled together over several years and included people – really prestigious committee of Sally Jewel, Jim Baker, Sandra Day O'Connor, Neil Wilson who all came together to look at the history of the Park Service. The then current state of the Park Service and then what was ahead for the next century. The report, which actually wasn't published until 2009 was this huge boost for Tule Springs I believe. Because it advocated that the Park Service should be looking at bringing in new sites, new Park units. But then there was also and this didn't happen until 2009, but there was a bubbling of interest in National Parks with Ken Burns documentary series [on PBS]. So, back to your question. I came into the job and my program of work which was outlined was to be a constituent to Harry Reid, which I was. I lived in Nevada but it was to present pretty much national issues on behalf of NPCA's Washington D.C. efforts to the southern and northern Nevada offices of Harry Reid. And then the other was to pretty much figure out what I'd be doing within Nevada. Obviously one of those things was to work on the coal fired power plants. As soon as I started, I had this feeling that to really establish NPCA in the community – it was kind of a go big or go home opportunity. And at an Earth Day event I

met Scott Rutledge, who was then the Director of the Nevada Conservation League. I arranged an appointment with him and he steered me to Jill and group [POTS, Protectors of Tule Springs]. He said, "You have got to go out and see Tule Springs. This is something you should be involved with." He also told me I should meet with Rob Mrowka who had worked for Clark County and had helped survey the area. And Hermi Hiatt who had also done some botany work out there regarding the bear poppy. But I met with POTS first and I will never forget that day. I met with Jill, Sandy Croteau, and Helen Mortenson and here you had these three women, dynamic women, dressed in safari hats and safari shirts, and Helen had an illustration on her Hummer with a big mammoth that said Ice Age Park. We drove actually into the wash and walked to what was called then 'Baby Mammoth Site' which I was in awe. The enthusiasm was incredible. The background information was like a torrent of information. Including talking about this site being the place of the 'Big Dig' in the 60's and being so important. And of course they mentioned they had at that time in months prior – I think it was in January, had met with Senator Reid. And Senator Reid had shown great interest. I think this was about May of 2008. I thought it could be a Park. I mean I did say that I had some concerns that it wasn't scenic in the classic scenic way National Parks are. But, I thought it really had some opportunity. I left them thinking that and I took it back to NPCA and I was really told that I shouldn't have spoken out that it could be a Park. There still was a feeling in the Park Service that new park units would cannibalize the lack of funding within the National Park Service. I was told you really shouldn't be talking about new parks. And I was admonished so much I even hated to go back and say to Jill and Sandy and Helen, "Look I don't even know if this is even possible." So, I went dark for a while - for several months, very quiet. But I should tell you I continued to look at other possibilities. I looked at if I was getting to know what I had to protect within the state. I was traveling around the state. I stopped at Nevada Northern Railway which was actively looking for a park status. I toured Gold Butte. The Friends of Gold Butte had been for years advocating that the area be protected. Of course during this time I was working on other conservation projects.

[Pause]

EE: Sorry, is your next comment related to prior to 2009? Because that's the next question.

LD: It is a little bit.

EE: Ok, go ahead.

LD: So, I have more to tell you about 2008. I did convince a couple of my colleagues, NPCA colleagues, to come out and see Tule Springs. And Ron Tipton, who had worked as a staff person, appointed staff person to the Second Century Commission came out as well as Neal Desai who—I don't recall his title at the time—but was in NPCA's San Francisco office. And I pulled together a three day tour for them to see Nevada, talk about the issues that I felt should be part of my work plan off of these sites. And the first day was meeting with Jill, Sandy, and Helen. They were totally impressed. Juan Tipton, more than Neal, but both of them very impressed. In fact Ron who had a big career in conservation for a long time. He said he had never seen anything like the branding of this Friends Group. It was a good first stop because he was pretty sold. We went and saw the Northern Nevada Railway. We also went to Gold Butte. But both Neal and Ron weighted in after all of this and said, "One, let's not interfere with Gold Butte's passionate supporters". That NPCA might have been seen as trespassing on their hard fought endeavors. So, that door was closed. But in November 2008 I was in D.C., and I made my

first visit since working for NPCA to Reid's Washington D.C. office. Now, I'd been working with the local and talking with the local office of Reid. Craig Obey, that's VP of Government Affairs for NPCA and I went to meet with Neil Kornze on a number of issues. And Neil just kind of glossed away those national issues and started talking about Tule Springs. How the Senator loved the presentation that Jill and group had given him. He also talked about the railroad. He talked about Gold Butte. He talked about Goldfield, Nevada and Senator Reid's interest in all four of them. Interest in supporting something – a new National Park unit in Nevada. So, Craig and I left knowing there was interest in these four but without any formal request. In December that year [2008] I met with Shannon Raborn and she was Senator Reid's Director of his Southern Nevada office. We met for lunch at this little hole in the wall Mexican restaurant while her Subaru was being repaired. I was thrilled to have that much time with her. We talked about new parks and really talked about Tule Springs. I said we needed a request thinking we'd get a letter. She said, "Well, consider this conversation as Senator Reid's formal request." Just as an aside, and I'm getting to 2009. We had four possible park units on the table for consideration that Senator Reid was interested in. As an aside on New Year's Day, 2009 I traveled to see Goldfield which is the crumbling remains of a once booming mining town that had hosted a very important boxing match. An inter-racial boxing match. Anyway, that sets up getting into 2009.

21:05

JD: This is Jill. Can I just clarify a date? Do you know what month it was in 2008 that Ron Tipton and Neil Desai came out? Just for my records.

LD: I can't say that off the top of my head. But I'm sure I could find out. I do want to say it probably was in September. Is that what you think?

JD: That's what I was thinking, yeah. Alright, thank you.

[Short pause as Lynn goes to checks on her dog]

23:30

EE: What were the next sequence of events that happened in 2009?

LD: OK. 2009, I think was from my perspective looking at what POTS had done was really a stabilizing, foundation building year. So, in January 2009 I flew to the Pacific West headquarters of NPS in San Francisco to meet with Jon Jarvis. He was the Regional Director then. And had not yet been appointed Director of the [National] Park Service. I had prepared a presentation on all three sites, but mostly focused on Tule Springs and the railroad. I only mentioned Goldfield. I took some briefing papers which I have in my digital files and will provide the Park Service. So, I went in with Neal Desai and it was just Neal, Jon, and I. We had a really good conversation. Jon Jarvis said straight up, "The Park Service cannot afford to take on the railroad. Too costly". There had been some experience with that. He also said straight up, "While Gold Butte makes sense for the NPS to manage, given its geography and access to Lake Mead, that the effort to make it a BLM designation should be honored." He agreed and seemed to give his most positive nod to Tule Springs. He said he would get a paleontologist to access it. And in that conversation we discussed what would happen if this assessment was positive. And given Senator Reid's interest to move very quickly on it would we need a much longer special analysis report, which could slow things down. And I don't recall that we resolved that question. But I do recall that

within a couple of weeks I heard from Ted Fremd, who has had this amazing career with the National Park Service, who had been assigned to look at Tule Springs. He wasn't happy about the assignment. I think that is something he would confirm. He was about to retire. As I recall his retirement date was the end of April and between January and the end of April he was expected to go up there. Look at this fossil site because of a quote unquote, "a political request" and file a report. I'm sure that Jill and others have wonderful stories about this. As Ted Fremd and his team got ready to go I was having some conversations with him. I was asking if we could go a long with him. He was very disdainful of that act. And said "No. He wasn't going to be influenced by anyone advocating for this site. He was there on a purely scientific mission." We did agree that we would meet for the first time as he and his team finished their work. And the Friend Group and Jill. I think it was just Jill. It could have been Sandy as well. We would get together for dinner and Ted Fremd was absolutely insistent that he was not going to reveal what he thought of his findings. So, I think Jill and I had some nail biting thoughts during that week he and his team were out there in the field. We met at a restaurant at a local casino kind of near Tule Springs. As I recall I think Kathleen Springer was there and maybe some of her team. But we met for dinner and the first thing he did was he came over and he said, "Look, we need to save this site". Which was so exhilarating. One of the more exhilarating parts of the whole campaign. I don't recall us getting his report until May and the report was very short. It really talked about, as I recall, even some of the words were 'mans-hand on the landscape'. Talked about it being crisscrossed with transmission lines and junk that had been tossed in the area. He really made no illusions that there was clean-up to be done. That it wasn't the prettiest of sites. But he really made the case that as far as anyone knew this could be the most important Ice Age fossil site in the world for the span of fossils it was able to demonstrate. And we were off – off on the race to make it a campaign.

30:15

EE: Great. So you probably already covered this in some of the previous questions in your conversation, but was there anything else you had to add as far as what the game plan was in NPCA's eyes for Tule Springs?

LD: So, NPCA, and this continues the story of 2009 certainly. NPCA's quote unquote "game plan" I don't know if we ever called it a game plan was to behind the scenes in a very informal way map out a campaign that first of all – hold community leaders to kind of access their support. And to use the Ken Burn's documentary, the Second Century report with community leaders, to ask them, "What if?" And it was really to keep POTS and other local groups to the fore front. It wasn't ever to be a national group coming in and telling locals what to do. It also really, Ron Tipton in particular had really recognized this energy that Jill had started. And unlike some Friends Groups it didn't need a whole lot. It was sort of organic to the group. It was important to come in and do what we could on a federal level. To do things during the day that, Jill is a teacher and Sandy and Helen, and some others maybe couldn't do. To provide the campaign with staff. So, really in February after giving this nod from Jon Jarvis I recall feeling very positive, very confident that Tule Springs was off the block. And part of it I think was Jill and I would talk. We would talk like every day she drove to school. Practically every day. And I think part of it was – I couldn't even fathom – driven by Jill. Because Jill couldn't believe it either. This was a place that was going to be saved right? So, in February I started reading more about the Big Dig. I was listening a whole lot more. I was turning to people. I should stop here

and go back to 2008. I need to mention this and I'm sorry this jumps back. But, in 2008 I met with Alan O'Neal who has been the Superintendent of Lake Mead National Recreation Area retired and he founded the Outside Las Vegas Foundation. This was after, I am pretty certain this was after, Ron and Neal had come out and toured Tule Springs. I met with him for lunch and I asked him what he thought. I had been told that the Park Service may not embrace a new unit. That this had been identified in the Second Century Report that not enough funding left park units devoid of what they really needed. New National Parks may not really be accepted. But Alan O'Neal at that time was incredibly enthusiastic. He went home and wrote a several page document about why he thought it was viable, Tule Springs was viable. He outlined some of the things that had happened in new unit's years and decades before that had helped these new units be established. So, in February or so I am turning back to that document that Alan O'Neal provided and I'm basically looking at all of the other things we possibly could bring into Tule Springs to make more of a case. One of those examples was going to Clark County. I don't recall Jill, you can confirm this, if you had met with Clark County about the tortoise mitigation program? But somehow that stood out. I met with Marci Henson and I met with – this morning I am struggling with his name. I want to say Lewis Walcott who worked for Clark County.

JD: Was it Wallenmeyer?

LD: That's it. It was Wallenmeyer, Lewis Wallenmeyer. Thank you. Thank you. And I met with Louis. I'm taking places that Jill has been and looking at the NEEPA document, the disposal document and I'm looking at all of these things as threads that we kind of needed to bundle in. Jill had opened the doors to Clark County Commissioner Tom Collins with POTS story, who was the director then. Congresswoman Shelly Berkley's office and the Air Force. Jill set up appointments. I tagged along with her being introduced. Jill was making those rounds again and then because I had topics beyond Tule Springs I had opportunities to talk with people who were outside the geographic county district boundaries or the Congressional District. One of those and this is probably a bad example because she came in later but I one would be I met with County Commissioner Mary Beth Scow and it was my first meeting with her. She wanted to talk about these weirs that were in the Wetlands going into Lake Mead National Recreation Area. I remember looking at those kinds of meetings as opportunities to advance the idea of Tule Springs. The reason she's a bad example is she came in earlier – and this morning I can't think of who some of the Commissioners who were in play then. I think Larry Brown might have been one. But, in 2009 those names are not coming to me right now. There were those opportunities. But the other thing was Jill and group and I were working on tours – mostly by vehicle into the wash. And if this hasn't been put in the Oral History it needs to. There was one particular trip we took then U.S. Senator John Ensign and North Las Vegas Mayor Sheri Buck into the wash – driven by Helen Mortenson in her massive Hummer. And gave them quote/unquote "adventure experience" with Helen's driving. It was one of those iconic moments and Jill I hope you've talked about that.

JD: I love it. (Laughter)

LD: We also had opportunities – I remember this truly had to be in the spring of 2009 because it was kind of a grey day and there had been a rain in the wash. But we arranged a five, maybe six, truck caravan of dignitaries into the wash, including Paiute Tribal leaders, Nellis Air Force Base. We took in Reynolds, former Superintendent of Death Valley. I can't think of his first name.

JB: Was that J.T. Reynolds?

LD: Yes, J.T. Thank you so much. We invited a bunch of quote/unquote “new people”. Now the Air Force was new to the wash but there were new people in the group. I don’t know if there had been Paiute Tribal leaders led by this interest in the National Monument. But, J.T. Reynolds, we took some staff members from the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Association into the wash. It was great. And also I should note one of the Air Force vehicles got stuck, which ended up being something that this group ended up talking about. I think it was part of that comradery and some of it was just the fact that people had stories of getting into the area.

41:25

LD: So, during that time we are working on message points. POTS had put up a website and Jill and I worked on some points that made this more national. More National Parks focus. But we’re still being kind of careful that we’re not talking about National Park too soon to too broad of an audience. I do have to say Lewis Wallenmeyer from Clark County truly gave me the idea of writing. I was looking to him for some language on conservation in Clark County and wanting to fit in with some unique proposals there in language. And he said, “You need to do a resolution. You need to get Clark County to pass a resolution on this.” The resolution, I believe, was key in 2009. It laid out the idea of the National Monument but it didn’t specify acreage. It didn’t talk about anything that might have been slapped down. In fact it was passed unanimously over two consecutive days in November 2009. We would later find out that some people, who eventually came around I might add, thought that the acreage of the National Monument should be maybe 20 acres. You know, just enough to save a little bit of the fossil site. Note, those people came around later to a much larger site. Getting that passed was one of the critical, I think, parts of the campaign. Because it really committed the community. And then the details could be worked out from there. By June, 2009, and I do have this in my documents, which I will provide – my digital documents – I drafted a brief that was sent to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and to NPS Director Jon Jarvis. I’m guessing after about a year after that was drafted, I’m guessing that brief found its way to the White House, to the Council on Environmental Quality because I started to get calls. And I would be getting calls about every three months or so from CEQ asking about what had happened in the past three months? What was the status of the park unit? As President Obama’s team studied options.

45:00

LD: Back to 2009. What several groups did and POTS in particular in anticipation – it took a lot to get a unanimous buy-in from every County Commissioner, from the Mayors of both the City of Las Vegas and the City of North Las Vegas and their respective councils to get a unanimous buy-in. A ton of work. The resolutions were massaged a little bit but they generally voted on the same thing and they all passed it. During that time POTS and some other groups started working on endorsement letters from all sorts of groups. Some were conservation groups. We have one from the Las Vegas Visitors Convention Bureau – endorsement letters that were bundled into binders. A soon as that resolution passed and it may have been that night or it was within the next day or two POTS came by my office and we worked on bundling those letters into binders. Sending them all to the Congressional Delegation and to the Secretary of Interior Director Jarvis, which was incredibly satisfying. I don’t believe I have a copy of those binders and I’m hoping

someone does. I do have a copy of the letters that were sent, a digital copy. I think that sums up 2009 pretty much.

47:28

EE: Ok. I know you mentioned a lot of people already, but who did you invite into the Coalition to advocate for Tule Springs and why? Is there anybody that you haven't mentioned yet?

LD: Jill heard me say this a lot I think but making a National Park unit seems like making a movie. You need a bunch of different people to serve different purposes. You need to keep bringing people into the fold. You need to sustain interest by the twists and the turns and fresh messaging. I do have a list of people and groups I think were important in no particular timeline. But, I need to say when I first started out I made some mistakes. And the key mistake if I was to do this again was jumping into this and heading out to visit with the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority rather than focusing on the local conservation that really put time and effort and blood, sweat, and tears into Nevada's conservation. I particularly recall organizing a meeting to announce—which was completely a wrong strategy—to announce a strategy to a bunch of conservationists and conservation groups like the Nevada Wilderness Project, not Friends of Nevada Wilderness. And not inviting the Friends of Nevada Wilderness, not realizing how offensive that could be to Friends of Nevada Wilderness. But just the prospect of going in and saying, “Hey, here's what's going on” without getting more buy-in. And really bringing them in from the ground up. Those groups, Friends of Nevada Wilderness, the Nevada Conservation League, the Tortoise Group, all of them became really important. But should have been - I don't feel that I handled that well and there was some dust that I felt I ate in 2009 in not getting them engaged from the get-go. But I also felt we were moving kind of fast and honestly that didn't dawn on me. But, in the list of organizations that were brought in – mind you – Jill and group are talking to these people, NPCA I'm talking to these people. Sometimes we are talking together. It's becoming very much a connected network of someone like John and Hermi Hiatt let's say talking to maybe Peg Reece, of the UNLV Public Lands Institute. The idea of a National Park seemed to spread. The people who came on board were really I believe all critical to making the National Monument. Some were more engaged then others. A whole lot more engaged. But just getting endorsements from groups, tourism groups were important. Chambers at that time were not all one metro chamber. Going to each chambers was important. Diversity was really important. Isaac Barron, North Las Vegas councilman was very, very helpful in bringing along the Hispanic community. We hired a brief consultant [Chris Turrals Scott] – NPCA hired an African American [Chris Turrals Scott], and I went out with him and he would speak to black groups. He is one of the best speakers. Just an amazing speaker and he'd get them involved. We brought along Veteran's groups, Post 87 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars or whatever. But, we always had in mind bringing on as broad of a coalition as possible. And then the Coalition itself. The actual working, roll up the sleeves Coalition, I would say was probably twelve people from different organizations. We would convene frequent meetings. I'm going to stop right there. I could provide a lot of names and be flooded with a lot of names that are coming to mind. Perhaps at another time we can go over some of those people.

54:07

EE: Ok. Was the Coalition—I've heard it called different names based on the different groups that were involved but—was it just called the Tule Springs Coalition? Was there an actual name or was it just a group of people?

LD: No, we didn't formalize it because you have Protectors of Tule Springs, right? And it was kind of morphed a little bit and we didn't, I think purposely name it. But maybe Jill would disagree. I don't recall it. The Tule Springs Coalition but I don't think it was formalized in any way.

EE: Ok. Go ahead Jill.

JD: I agree. Nothing was ever formalized. We welcomed anyone that wanted to participate and work. We were all in for anyone who could help.

EE: We are about halfway through the interview and I just want to give a chance. I know that you shared a lot of information so far and I want to give Jill and Jon a chance to ask any additional questions related to what we've talked about so far. Jill, did you have anything to ask Lynn?

JD: No, this is like stepping back in time for me. I really appreciate it. I would like though Lynn, because I don't have a really good list of that ten to twelve group, working group for the archives. I have a list of who I think was there but you were more involved with them than I was since I was working. Anyway, if you could provide a list of groups and people you remember being in that core group that would be great.

LD: I'd be happy to do that.

56:20

EE: Jon, did you have any questions so far for Lynn?

JB: Not really, just I wish that I at the time better understood all this. I was so busy with breaks in fences and things like that that every time Lyn and I talked I missed some of these details. It's very fascinating. I was wondering if there was any more in terms of experiences you had in that early period about the whole idea of whether it should be managed by the NPS or the BLM? Was there any experiences you had of interactions with BLM folks about any of their desires for the land?

LD: That's such a great question. Yes, a very smart one that needs to be inserted at least in my narrative. I'm certain Jill has said this too. As we started putting the idea of a National Park unit out there it was really important to focus on what the National Park insignia was. And what the importance and public love for National Parks is and not allow people to denigrate the BLM. I think, and I'm very proud of this, and when I say I'm proud of this, I shared this with everyone who was inner circle on this. I think we accomplished the campaign without denigrating the BLM. When we get into the corridor, the energy corridor, we define that separation a little bit more. But a couple of the things we did early on was we talked about having a park unit that close to the boundary of urban development. And the fact that people get their park passes stamped and the fact that this could be one of those things and how beloved the Park Service was. We also talked about, to some people, because [for] the broad public the love of the Park

Service was enough. To some people we talked about the difference in how the Park Service manages fossils in contrast to the BLM. Jill had established an excellent relationship with, I'm having such a hard time with names – with Gayle Mars-Smith. I think that was very, very critical. There was one time that I realized in an interaction with BLM and it was over a tour that we had planned with Congressional people that the BLM backed out of. And that this was hard for BLM to be kind and wonderful. I think at one point the BLM recognized – Wow, this really is something - and became more attached to it too. There was one conversation that I realized – that was really tough for them. But, on the surface they were, in my dealings, they were wonderful to work with. I know they gritted their teeth about this being transferred to the Park Service. Or some of them did. And yet they really were generous and helpful. But, what I'm most proud of – I remember this – walking in with Jill. She had met with County Commissioner Tom Collins a few times and we walked in to talk about it being a National Park unit. This might have been the first time that for Collins, that had been put on the table. Let's say it was. But I do remember him wanting to talk about some other things with the BLM and all this. And we just think everybody pretty much held their ground about not allowing it to be a Park Service vs. BLM campaign. It was more the vision of the campaign.

JB: Very good. Just to add context. One of the things that amazed me when I got on the ground was how incredibly helpful BLM folks were. Because when I was working in the Senate one of the BLM Legislative Affairs people was so incredibly incensed with the idea that this was going from the BLM to the Park Service. This person reiterated this was the BLM position that they were absolutely opposed to it. So, when I got on the ground I was so incredibly pleasantly surprised at the good work you guys had done to make people feel as good as possible about it. That work you guys did – you didn't create those challenges for later Park Service folks on the ground. I just really appreciate what you and Jill did there. So, thanks you guys.

LD: Well, I want to throw about 99% of that on Jill. Jill had a really good relationship with Gayle Mars-Smith and I did end up—especially in later years—interacting more and more with Gayle. It was truly a very respectful relationship.

LD: I also want to add something about when I talk about going in to see Jon Jarvis. I would highly recommend that during this Oral History that one of the attachments is put in the document. Maybe something about how new parks were handled then. And then there is an analysis that I think came out in 2013 or 2014 about how new National Parks were created then and maybe even now, seven years after that. There was first of all a very difficult process, under George, Sr. and George W. Bush, where there were no new parks created really. There were processes that got held up in special reports. But Jon had a great respect towards honoring the other agencies. I think that was perhaps why he was made Director of the Park Service. So, his respect that was shown in my conversation in January of 2009 was – we don't poach. And I'm not ascribing those words to him but that was implied directly and was very much a directive. That this whole thing was to never go in there and quote/unquote “take something”. I really am very proud that there was a respect for the BLM because during this time too BLM was going through the process as well. Anyway, I could talk a lot about that. (Laughter) I hope that's enough.

JB: Very cool. Thank you.

1:06:06

EE: Lynn, what do you remember about the Nevada Energy Corridor problem?

LD: Ok, (Laughter) I hope the transcript says she laughed first.

EE: It will. (Laughter)

LD: Ok. It's very interesting to me that I have a hard time recalling all of the intensity and the details of this time, because believe me, it was intense and complicated. It was not a good time. By 2010 we really had teed up the idea for the legislation and I have to look at the timeline – but that could have even been when the first bill was written. And then we get to this almost cartoonish, screeching stop. And that is that Nevada Power wants to put legislation in there to run a Transmission Corridor through the area. I looked through files over the weekend, digital files, and it's interesting that I didn't find a lot. Because there were almost three years of fighting that Corridor. I will tell you that it involved a lot to fight that Corridor. One of the things – there were several proposals on the table. One of which was to split the Monument. It was to take the current Corridor along the Desert National Wildlife Refuge and to allow the Park Service to manage anything south of that. And then for BLM to manage everything else up to what ended up being the boundary of Tule Springs. That was one of the proposals to handle the issue of the Corridor quote/unquote “handle the issue of the Corridor”. I will say that NPCA was very involved in this on a National level in running some of these proposals by unnamed National Park Service people to see what the appetite would be for some of the proposals. Knowing what the Park Service felt about possibly losing all of the fossil potential north of that line, about precedence in running transmission lines through National Park units, we NPCA held the line. At times that meant I was really a lightning bolt with Nevada Power, NV Energy. I will say we took a really hard stance on that and definitely played the bad cop. Other groups at this time, which was great, and also very strategic, were keeping their hands clean and playing the good cop. Because we didn't want the proposal to die over this Corridor. We had to keep sustaining interest. It was intense. I will tell you that several groups came together and we actually appealed to the Public Service Commission. We went in and gave all sorts of testimony. Testimony that was really weeks, probably weeks, in preparing and that was read into Public Service Commission hearing on renewable energy development. It was an opportunity to talk about this Transmission Corridor. That was one of the things. There was a woman from the Sierra Club named Rita, Jill will know her last name, who really delivered a lot of that testimony. That was one of our tactics. Another tactic was working with a rural cooperative energy company out of Pahrump that was trying to get some out of Nye County that was trying to get some energy to / from their power sites. Nye County was working with the Paiute tribe. It was really very, very complicated in terms of what we were talking about. Maybe to some degree that was good because the public – it was boring stuff. It was really wonky stuff and the public was being brought along with the vision of the park. At this time we're going to - POTS had set up a table at Boy Scouts Festival or Jamboree, Girl Scout stuff and was at the Science Festival, all of this. You have this really wonderful vision outside of this whole mess as the Corridor was being opposed, not just in Nevada but in D.C. and there was one lobbyist in particular who had the ear of Senator Reid and he had a lot of influence with Senator Reid. And we did what we could in numbers in vocal opposition to eventually settle on what happened with this 15-year option regarding the Corridor. It ended up – I'm not unhappy with how it ended up. But it was like taking the legislation right to the moment where it looked like it was going to pass. And then being slapped with this core Transmission Line.

1:14:07

LD: I will say there are a couple things that should be mentioned in this. One, NPCA paid for our consultant to come in and do an analyses. He was a real third-party objective consultant who put together a really, really, really wonky report on Nevada's transmission needs. He debunked a myth that NV Energy was using and that was they couldn't put transmission lines together or site them in current corridors. He did a lot. I ended up taking his information and re-writing or putting his information in it in a real wonky report but was a little bit more acceptable. Which we shipped out quietly to Senator Reid, the Congressional Delegation. Gave copies to NV Energy, the Public Service Commission. I think that that ended up being effective. We invited the Public Service Commission and their staff to come out and see the site and they took it. They came out. We had a special tour that was done with the Public Service Commission. There were a couple of things that ended up being really effective in that. You know what? I'm honestly, it was such a bad memory I'm certain there are things I am forgetting (laughs) here that were done during that time. We convened meetings. We had one meeting I will never forget. We convened a meeting and it was almost like a [view in] meeting where everyone could bring so many people to the table and they needed to designate a spokesperson. NV Energy was at the table and they showed up late and they walked in with twice the people they had agreed upon including this D.C. lobbyist. Anyway, there are those memories.

1:17:05

EE: Thanks, Lynn.

JD: Can I ask a question? So, the other day I found the report that the letter we sent to Senator Reid and the long report that you put together about these meetings. And I will certainly go into it when my Oral History is done as well. Do you have that the consultant you all hired was Tim Hay? Do you have that report?

LD: No.

JD: Oh, it was not?

LD: No, but we did get him involved too. Tim Hay was very, very involved.

JD: Do you have that report? Because we're going to need it.

LD: Yes.

JD: NV Energy is applying for that corridor.

LD: They are?

JD: Yes, so I would love to have that report.

LD: Probably should be taken out of the transcript – but yes, I do.

JD: I'd like to see the report. Thank you.

LD: So, the report I have – I don't know if it is in digital form but I think I know I have one hard copy, maybe more, which are more in my personal file that I think is important. And I don't

recall the gentlemen's name but you will have it. And then there are some NPCA hard files that ended up being stored in the NPCA's California desert office which I think will have several of those copies I hope.

JD: Ok. Thank you.

LD: Tim Hay actually was a clean energy advisor has also been on the PSC, who was very, very critical in helping us with the corridor. He was not the consultant we hired. But Tim also had Senator Reid's ear on this and probably should be interviewed. Now that you say that. Maybe a short interview about his recollection of the transmission story would be something that should to be looked into.

1:19:40

EE: Thanks Lynn. What were the legislative hurdles for establishing Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument?

LD: You know, I actually want to rephrase it. And say, what were the legislative opportunities? Because I would like to go back on something I said before. One, you have a senior Senator, Majority Leader, who had created Nevada's only National Park unit, Great Basin, who was interested in doing something else before he retired. So, that was an incredible opportunity to have, which helped us with the rest of the delegation. There was a second opportunity there. Under SNPLMA, the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act and under SNAP [Southern Nevada Agency Partnership] which was more the operational side of that. A number of federal agencies had really started working together and were very respectful of their relationship with federal partners. Which was also an amazing opportunity. By example I am going to use the Desert Wildlife Refuge. The fact that this legislation for Tule Springs was also going to be meaningful to them and was a dialogue they could talk about the benefits to both was really important. And I think without that, I think the legislation might have been tanked. I think it could have.

LD: You know, Jon, you just mentioned what was happening with a legislative context from BLM in D.C.. Had these federal agencies not been partners that definitely we know this, wouldn't have gotten to D.C. and it could have been a tougher, tougher road. Right? I think that the legislative hurdles became opportunities again. You know, Ken Burns documentary it was – people who typically didn't watch PBS saw that documentary. The fact that Nevada – around Nevada you have Arizona, the Grand Canyon state, you have Arches on the license plates of Utah. There were things about just being a National Park unit at a particular time when we had this documentary. On the federal side you have this report, the looming Centennial of the Park Service. Those were things that worked so much in concert with seeing this legislation. But here's where I really think NPCA played the best role. And that was around the country there had been a bubbling up of a lot of projects. New interest in National Parks, like the Manhattan Project for instance. And you had some of these ideas for National Parks units had sat on the back burner a long, long, long time. And here comes Tule Springs. You have the Senate Majority Leader leading his own legislative interest in his own state. Being able to bring a number of park units, put them in a package together, meant everything. I think Jon's perspective here, being on the inside of that process, is so much a part of this story because Tule Springs, from my perspective, was brought along because Harry Reid brought along all those park units. One of the

other legislative opportunities was the fact that it was bundled into the National Defense Authorization Act, which had not been done before. But, you had a person in power who was able to again bundle these all into some must pass legislation. So, there was so much serendipity to it. So many people stirring the pot. Everyone holding a certain position in this. It really was, I think, a golden moment of legislation. So NPCA did this about two years before the legislation passed. And I don't remember what Congress it was. I should be able to count back here. But basically determined that they were going to really start running up the flagpole new park units. And they created the campaign. They hired an artist. There were these kind of colorful postcards that were made and stat sheets that were done on each unit. Which were eventually put in a poster form that looked kind of like a quilt. But, for a couple of years there'd be a lobby day, let's say for NPCA. There'd be a lobby day where people came in from Delaware. I think that was the first time Delaware Park had been made under federal legislation and so people were provided these fact sheets in this colorful context of why this park unit was important. And then why all these park units were important. I think NPCA played an incredible role as well as the other green groups – the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society. Everyone got behind this campaign. But it was being done in Washington and certainly Senator Reid was absolutely critical through it all. Did I answer that question, ok?

1:27:40

EE: Definitely. How did you get past the Rob Bishop amendment?

LD: Well, (Laughter) so Rob Bishop agreed, as Chairman of the National Resources Committee – House Committee, he did agree to a hearing on Tule Springs. That hearing really, I need to say, was great. It really pulled in people who had credibility with Rob Bishop. It pulled in Chamber of Commerce people, lots of Republicans in that it was purposeful in who spoke there. And what was presented. It was interesting because it appeared or it was scheduled, I think, at the very beginning or the very end of the 2013 government shutdown. So the committee was going on but the government was shut down. The message points were about the basic economy and what's the beauty of Nevada, but it also focused a lot on economic value. We purposely had never talked a lot about climate change in the whole campaign. And that certainly wasn't part of the testimony either. So there was a great – I think we have to start with that committee that Rob Bishop did hold that committee hearing. And it was a really excellent committee hearing. I was not there. I watched it. But it was one of the better moments of the campaign.

1:29:50

LD: So, I don't know how many months later but we see Rob Bishop has gone through the bill and where it had been maybe a 50 plus page bill, he has taken out at least half the legislation. In particular his interest in it was really taking out something that's critical to Nevada and it was bargaining on the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act, which has proven to be incredibly beneficial when you have so many – such a big percentage of public lands in Nevada. And there was a lot that we in Nevada never got involved with. This became an issue between Congressman Bishop and Senator Reid. One of the things that did happen was some Republicans from Nevada, including Mayor—Jill, help me I can see these people, Jon, Mayor from north Las Vegas.

JD: Oh, Jon Lee.

JB: Jon Lee.

LD: Jon Lee—thank you—who named Jon Burpee Day so how can I forget that? Anyway to, basically –and the Chamber of Commerce who had all these Chambers in the Las Vegas Valley joined together into the Metro Chamber of Commerce, issued an invitation to Rob Bishop to come and visit the site. And that invitation was surprisingly accepted. Now, there was ties to Republican support – to him in Congress. Clearly that is one of the reasons he came to Nevada, to walk the wash. He was there about an hour. But that was a critical part of that campaign and getting his buy-in. I will never forget that day. I’m betting Jill will never forget that day. He showed up and he showed up – Rob Bishop showed up with the lobbyist who had made our lives miserable about the corridor. The unnamed lobbyist who had made our lives miserable. And he showed up with the NV Energy folks. We had the Air Force there, the paleontologists there. We had the media there. Although there was an attempt to keep the media, not on our behalf, but there was an attempt to keep the media from there but they had heard about it. There was a little tussle about them being there and the media walked right along. There’s a bigger story that I suspect on SNPLMA / Bishop bargaining on other things. But clearly that walk through the wash was important. The legislation was restored. Jon Burpee can really speak to that legislation and the passage of that. I do have to say during that time we had Junior Congressman Steven Horsford who was very roped into that legislation and seeing that pass. He was communicating practically on a daily level certainly Sara Moffitt, who was by then handling Senator Reid’s Public Land’s legislation was reporting back. And part of her job, part of what she was doing truly remarkable as well. She was sticking together a lot of support through the Senate by these other pieces of legislation. But that’s about all I can really say about the Bishop involvement. I do want to point to the fact that that hearing probably should be mentioned or in the archives regarding Tule Springs. And that was a sweet moment. Then we had the saltier moments, but eventually got the legislation.

1:35:25

EE: So, you kind of already answered my last question. But is there any other – did you have any other best moments that you wanted to mention before the end of the interview?

LD: There were so many good moments (Laughter). I mean incredible. Hopefully my dialog has peppered those moments. There were great moments of celebration. There were moments of nail biting. There were moments of great worry – could see everything slip away. I did think Tule Springs is a remarkable place and has attracted remarkable people. I think how it was built can be very instructional in how to put together a community, pull together a community. And I think Las Vegas was built on consumerism and conservation was not prevalent. It was such a, in anyone’s mind, I think Las Vegas was changed for the better with it.

1:36:54

EE: Well, before we end the interview I wanted to give Jon and Jill a chance to ask any main questions about what we already talked about. Jill, do you have any questions for Lynn?

JD: Let Jon go first. I’m composing myself.

JB: No, I really don’t have any questions. Thank you Lynn. This has been absolutely fascinating and will be an incredible aide to future park managers and those who are just going to be able to

look back at the successes of Tule Springs and where they started. So, thank you for everything you did for that park. Also for me personally when I got on the ground there – really appreciate it.

LD: Oh, thank you. Thank you Jon. So delightful to get to know you.

1:37:58

EE: I was trying to see if Vince was still on the line and had any questions before you [Jill] go.

JD: Oh, I think Vince was leaving at 9:30 our time and not coming back.

EE: OK, I wasn't sure if he was coming back or not. You can go ahead if you want.

JD: Well, Lynn I was going to not cry because Vince keeps telling me there is no crying in paleontology. But it just brings back all of the wonderful memories of what we accomplished. I'm so glad you took the time to do this. Without NPCA and you this could never happen. We just didn't have that power and the money certainly to carry it off. It's a vital part of the story and I just thank you for all the contributions. Please send to the NPS whatever you have for the future because I've had calls from groups to ask how we did this. And the minute I start going into it they disappear. Like, it's too much work. It was a lot of work but well worth it. So, thank you.

LD: Ok. So, now I have tears in my eyes and you and I Jill need to connect. I long for it. You were such a part of my life. I mean like every part of my life. I feel so good to reconnect with you. You know you actually go for a few years and you think, "Ahhh, how do you even open that door?" I'm so glad to be talking about this. I adore you. I loved the campaign! It was a lot of work. There is no question. It was night and day and weekends. It was all of that and it was well worth it.

1:40:18

LD: I do want to say one thing on the record here. And that is as I was looking through my stuff I realized all of this is very 'me' focused. It is only my perspective and I definitely acknowledge that my perspective is 'my' perspective. That advantage does not tell the story of so many other people who contributed. And I definitely want to say that because I felt like there was so much serendipity in this campaign. It was like the right person would step into the picture at the right time. And you might see them just for a moment but it just had that kind of goldenness about it. Which I know sounds very 'woo-woo' but I'm honored to have been a part of it. And more preventing certainly only what I saw. So many other stories that are represented in Tule Springs.

1:41:47

EE: This has been great Lynn. I really enjoyed listening to you and your amazing accomplishments that helped establish Tule Springs. So, really appreciate it. Thank you so much.

LD: Thank you. And Jill, I'm messaging you with my number.

JD: Ok. Well, when you have someone in Las Vegas and this whole pandemic is over and you're here we can get together.

LD: As soon as I can (laughter) get there I will. Thank you for this opportunity. It's really made my day in even thinking about it.

EE: Yes, and I will be in touch with you too, Lynn.

LD: Alright. Sounds good. Happy Holidays.

JB/EE/JD: Happy Holidays. Happy Holidays, everyone.

1:42:52

JD: Erin, I'm not sure which part you can't –don't want in there for the NV Energy thing, but can you guys get around that? Erin?

[Erin has left the call]

JB: Hey, Jill we miss you and have a great holiday, ok? It's a challenging year in many ways. But the Burpees send a lot of love.

JD: Well, I appreciate it and you guys have great holidays together. Bye.

JB: Ok. Thanks Jill. Bye.

1:43:40

[END OF INTERVIEW]



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