

MICHAEL HOUCK

TAPE 2, Side 1

January 18, 1996

M.O'R.: [This is a continuation of the interview] with Mike Houck on January 18th, 1996.

When you were at Oregon Episcopal School, was there any awareness at that point of the Tualatin, or did that come later?

M.H.: Well, there was, but indirectly. Not the Tualatin per se, but there is a major wetland on campus at OES that was not then owned by Oregon Episcopal School, and that's where I got my first - my feet wet, as it were, in that wetland, literally and policy-wise.

I had a planner - I called up the Planning Department of Washington County and had them come to school to talk to the kids about land use planning, what it was and how it could be used to protect areas, like the marsh next to the school. And actually a result of that - you know, history is what you call, or who wins whatever battles - but my recollection of the zoning on that marsh was that it stemmed from that visit to the school, and talking with the kids, and my getting involved and writing comments. And the County actually put a very restrictive zoning over that marsh so that you could not go in and fill it and put a bunch of houses on it. You could put one or two houses, maybe, on some upland area that had been filled prior to that.

In fact, I remember driving down Nicol Road, Southwest Nicol Road, which goes into the school off Scholls Ferry, and seeing these guys standing there making these broad gestures. They all

had suits on and shiny shoes. And I stopped and walked up to them and said, "Well, what are you doing here?"

And they said, "Well, we're going to put condominiums all over here."

And I said, "Oh, really?" I said, "Well, they're going to be pretty damn wet." I said - I pointed to a house that was sitting there, and you could see the water line up to the windows. I said, "That's where the water comes up to."

And they said, "Really?"

I said, "Yeah."

I don't know what ever became of them, but they went away, and nothing ever happened. Eventually the school bought it, so the marsh now belongs to Oregon Episcopal School. It's beautiful, although it's changed a lot in character. I'm a little concerned about those changes over time, because it's now more open water and less emergent marsh habitat.

But the fact of the matter is that's where I got my first inkling that there was such a thing as a land use planning program. I didn't have a clue until that point. And so I knew about Fanno, but I had not yet - I didn't understand where Fanno went, I didn't know that it emptied into the Tualatin at Durham. That I did not know at that point.

That was sort of the first step.

M.O'R.: What's caused the change in the marsh?

M.H.: Beaver moved in and dammed it and created a lot of open water habitat.

M.O'R.: Oh, yeah?

M.H.: Yeah.

M.O'R.: Well, at least it's a natural change.

M.H.: Yeah. Right.

And then I got - later - and I don't remember when this happened, but it was after I started doing the urban naturalist stuff at Audubon that Tualatin - St. Mary's Woods popped up, and of course that's where Cedar Mill Creek and Beaverton Creek converge in that park, which is - are other tributaries to the Tualatin.

But there again, it was that site that I knew about, and then Cedar Mill Creek further upstream, actually, and Johnson Creek further upstream I knew about, but I hadn't yet - and I think this is how things have progressed in the region, too - I personally had not made the connection that those were all related by virtue of being in the Tualatin watershed. They were isolated sites.

It was only later that I started advocating for a system, an interconnected system, and that consciousness was popping up throughout the community that, well, maybe - you know, of course now we're talking about managing entire watersheds, which was an evolutionary leap. They were all just isolated sites to me. The Tualatin River had no relevance whatsoever until I started going out on canoe trips with the Unified Sewerage Agency and some other folks and discovered that resource and went, "Wow! This is awesome."

M.O'R.: I think that's probably a somewhat typical way of discovering nature and the interconnectedness of things. You know, at first you don't appreciate that there's any connection whatsoever between these various sites.

M.H.: Right. And of course it's rather embarrassing, you know, later on when you realize that and go, "Geez, how could I have possibly ...?" But it's a matter of your focus.

M.O'R.: Right. Exactly.

M.H.: Perspective.

M.O'R.: Yeah. Well, okay. So let's see, I think in terms of the chronological order of things, even though we've been jumping back and forth a little bit, and that's fine, we had you on unemployment for a couple months there?

M.H.: Yeah, right. Max. Two months, max. Then I was gainfully employed again.

M.O'R.: And I imagine that this must have been a little bit of a tough issue at home again, then; is that right?

M.H.: No. Well, by then I was - Sandra and I were divorced.

M.O'R.: Oh, by then you were on your own. Okay. Well, then what was the next step after that period of R&R for a few weeks?

M.H.: Well, then I made a proposal to the Talented and Gifted Student Program, Portland Public Schools, to do TAG programs with grade school kids called "Urban Wildlife: What's in Your Back Yard?"

And the philosophy behind that was I would - and the philosophy and I guess the programmatic element was I would take a van - actually Mike Uhtoff's van - to a school, pick up five to ten kids, and go to a nature area near their school, the idea being, let's try to get kids thinking in terms of the fact that those needs are near them, or at least in the region, depending on where the school was located.

So out in North Portland, for example, I'd go out to the Columbia Slough. Actually, that's how I, quote, discovered a great blue heron rookery out at Heron Lakes Golf Course. A sixth grade girl - from I think Jacob Astor School in North Portland - told me one day that her grandmother knew where these big birds sat in the tops of trees. And I went, "Hmm. That sounds interesting. Let's go there."

So she called her grandmother and found out where it was, and the next trip we went out, and sure enough, there was a great blue heron rookery that no one knew was there. No one in the natural resource agencies, but of course everyone on the golf course knew it was there. And James River Corporation, which owns the land, knew it was there. But we didn't. And that became a cause celebre later down the road, like two or three years later when a freeway was proposed through there, which is another story.

M.O'R.: Right. And that would be an interesting one to talk a little bit about, too.

M.H.: Yeah. But at any rate, that's how the great blue heron - that's when the great blue heron got adopted as Portland's city bird. That was - I guess you might call that a strategic political move for publicity purposes or whatever that worked pretty well.

At any rate, I spent - I don't know - a year or two doing those TAG programs, and then the next evolutionary step was Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife came to Audubon and said they really didn't have the staff or the resources to conduct wildlife habitat inventories inside the urban growth boundary. Their interest - I think unfortunately - tends to be outside the urban growth boundary in the hinterlands.

So they said, "If we gave you some money through a grant, would you be willing to do these inventories?" And I didn't have a job at the time, other than these contracts with Portland Public Schools, which is, you know, not a lot of income, although it paid pretty well, but you know, it wasn't constant. So I wrote a grant request to Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's nongame wildlife program, got 5,000 bucks, this is in 1982, to pay me for however long \$5,000 goes.

And the first set of inventories I did - and this is when the Tualatin - this is when my first real knowledge of the Tualatin came up because I did inventories in nine CPO's, nine community participation organizations, a couple of which were actually on the Tualatin; and then of course the others were tributaries to the Tualatin.

And in fact, Richard Meyer, who's Director at Audubon now, was one of the planners I worked with then. This is '82, give or take. We just rediscovered all my old maps, my original maps, last week at Audubon, because the County had thrown them out.

M.O'R.: Oh, yeah?

M.H.: So I want to make those available to them again for their use and for citizens' use.

So I mean, I'm out there running all over the place in Washington County. I can't help but start wondering about this Tualatin River thing out there. "Hmm. Interesting resource." But it was in the context of doing these individual community wildlife inventories for the County, for free.

M.O'R.: Well, for free except - well, you were paid?

M.H.: Yeah. I mean, the County didn't have to pay anything.

M.O'R.: Right. Let me just ask you about the blue heron story, since you mentioned it in passing. Now, you were involved in helping the City of Portland come to the decision to make it ...

M.H.: Yeah. Well, that was ten years ago. This spring it will have been ten years that the great blue heron ...

M.O'R.: Okay. So it didn't happen right when you discovered the rookery?

M.H.: That was '85. No, it was just after. Yeah, it was two years after. And the reason was Marine Drive was going to be realigned, and one of the options was to move it south of where it is now, through the golf course next to the rookery and through all these wetlands. And Bud Clark, who actually I just saw again a couple nights ago at Delphina's; we were reminiscing about this - Bud Clark, who was then Mayor, had given a talk at the Hilton to the Western Association of State Fish and Wildlife Managers, like Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Idaho, and Washington. And he several times in his talk mentioned great blue herons, how amazing it was to see them flying in downtown Portland. And he canoes a lot, so he sees them on the rivers.

I grabbed him on his way out of the Hilton, and I said, "Bud, you talk about herons all the time. Why don't we make them our city bird? Wouldn't that be fun?"

And he said, "Yeah, that would be great."

So Ethan Selzer, who is Director of the Institute for Portland Metropolitan States at PSU now, was Mike Lindberg's aide, and I got together with Ethan, and we wrote a proclamation, which wasn't just the great blue heron, it was what the heron represented in the region, which was wetlands, wildlife habitat in the city. So it

was a surrogate for a broad ecological picture, concept for the region.

And the heron became Portland's official city bird in - I believe - it was '85 or '86. This is the tenth annual great blue heron week, but I think we actually got the heron adopted as Portland's official city bird a year or two before that, and then we started great blue heron week a year or two after. So it's been 10 or 12 years.

It so happened to coincide with the decision about the freeway through the rookery, and I won't say that it was purely a political sort of thing, but it was again one of those serendipitous coincidences: Bud's talking about herons, I say, "Let's make it the city bird." Yes, we do. Then of course I have to ask the question, "Well, are you going to actually approve a freeway through our city bird's rookery in North Portland?" I mean, come on.

And fortunately, for economic and other reasons, it just made no sense to move Marine Drive. They widened it where it is now. It serves Rivergate just fine. They get their trucks out there. It was stupid to suggest moving them, but James River Corporation at the time really wanted access to the river. So if you vacate Marine Drive, which is on the north side of their property, relocate it to the south side of their property, there's nothing between them and the river. And they spent about 500,000 bucks on consultants ...

M.O'R.: Trying to accomplish that, eh?

M.H.: Yeah. Which they didn't. So I call them up periodically, Jack Brown is their honcho there, and I say, "Jack, time to

donate that rookery to the City yet?" So we're working on it. It will happen eventually.

M.O'R.: It sounds like you try to keep up a relationship with people that wind up on the opposite side of the fence from you in these struggles, then?

M.H.: Yeah. Well, sure. And a lot of times you can. For example, we - I met at Bridgeport Brew Pub with Ralph Rogers, who's a friend of - was a wetland ecologist for EPA, the day the heron was adopted as the city bird. And the brewmaster at Bridgeport was walking by and asked how things were going at Audubon, and I told him about the bird. And he said, "Well, let's brew an ale." And he was just concocting an ale at that time, so Bridgeport - I don't know if you've ever had Blue Heron Ale ...

M.O'R.: I've seen it.

M.H.: Yeah. Well, that's how it came to be. And then they donate some money to Audubon. Well, four or five years ago Jack Brown, the same guy who I'd go to these hearings and battle, was sitting at Bridgeport Brew Pub, and I was throwing darts with a Brit friend, as I recall, and I turned around and there's Jack Brown.

Oh, no. It wasn't a Brit. It was Bill Burkett, whose a photographer. And I said, "Jack, you're drinking - what are you drinking there?"

He said, "Blue Heron Ale, Mike. What else? What else would I be drinking?"

And we laughed. And it turns out that he had just come back from having donated this big chunk of land on the lower Columbia to the Nature Conservancy. And the guy I was throwing darts with had

just come that day from photographing that spot and actually had a bunch of photos with him. I mean, talk about small worlds.

At any rate. So we yucked it up, and it was - yeah, you know. I remember calling him during the debate, and I said, "You're going to lose, Jack. You're going to lose this one. And so after the dust settles, how about if we get together and talk about your donating that property?" And he was - you know, he understood what was going on, and it wasn't personal animosity or anything. We had different objectives. And the dust maybe hasn't settled quite enough yet, but it's been a while, you know.

So yeah. I mean, there are some people that are so antithetical to my world view and philosophy that I will never get along with them and won't ever pretend to. There's just no way. But most people I've worked with and against on issues are decent human beings, and we can laugh about things and get together after the fact and work on issues cooperatively. Yeah.

And I think if you can't do that, you're not going to get very far. You're not going to - especially in this community. Portland is too damn small. This region, if you take the attitude that "They're assholes, and I'm never going to talk to them again," or "I'm never going to work with them," you won't have anyone to work with. It's just too tight-knit a community. And so there's that practical aspect to it as well as, I think, the philosophical one that you shouldn't - unless there's just no other option, which there are a few cases, but not many - and you know, if you demonize other people and they do the same to you, then we get into the situation that we've got in this country right now, which is very divisive and ...

M.O'R.: Polarized.

M.H.: Yeah. I mean, the other citizens I know that have been successful at that work and other conservationists have been also willing to work with other people and be conciliatory when possible. There are times, though, I - what's going on in Salem and D.C. right now, you have to take a hard-nosed approach, and we've got to go toe-to-toe and kick some butt. There's no alternative. There is no middle ground in some cases.

But in terms of what's going on on the Tualatin right now, as an example, there is all kinds of room for cooperation and doing voluntary sorts of programs, understanding that we need this regulatory baseline to work from. You've got to have the regulation, you've got to have the hammer. But if you have the hammer, and people know you're going to use it, then you can say, "Okay, how are we going to solve these problems now cooperatively?"

M.O'R.: Right.

M.H.: Now, with the Tualatin, I would say that the - personally, that the ag community has been pretty recalcitrant, and I'm disappointed with - I sat through - just sat through a year and a half talking about what the farm community needs to do to deal with water quality issues in the Tualatin, and I sat on this committee and agreed, "Yeah, okay, let's make it voluntary. Yeah, okay, let's focus on education. You know, let's not use the big hammer. Let's use education and cooperation to try to get people to change their practices."

And after having accepted that philosophy and that approach, they turn around and vote unanimously to not impose any fees to provide any money to carry out the program. You know, what are you

going to do? You talk to all the people that are supposed to implement it, they don't have staff. They don't have resources. So I'm pretty bitter right now about their commitment. And they point the finger at the urbanites, okay? They go "It's their problem. It's their fault. They're creating the problem, we aren't. We aren't responsible."

Then I go to a meeting, City of Portland, and the homebuilders say, "It's the goddamn farmers that are doing this to us. Why do we have to pay for what they're doing to us?" And then of course they'll all point to the Forest people. "Well, it's the foresters. They're out there cutting the - you know, riparian zones," or whatever. That's bullshit. I mean, really.

In fact, I was at a meeting, and I said, "I will not participate in this conversation if you're going to ..." The homebuilders, John Chandler and one of his colleagues. And I said, "I've had this discussion already out in Hillsboro with the farm folk, and they tell me it's your fault, you're doing it. It's both your faults, and it's mine. You know, it's everybody who lives in the Basin. And everybody has a stake in doing something to clean the goddamn river up. And this finger pointing is not going to get us anywhere."

M.O'R.: Doesn't clean up the river.

M.H.: That's right. Scapegoating.

M.O'R.: Well, you know, I think I sort of derailed you a little bit from talking about this initial Tualatin hit you had about the survey that you did, the wildlife survey. I think you'd said that at that point you were beginning to get an awareness of the Tualatin. What ...

M.H.: Well, because the Tualatin actually flowed through some of those CPO's, and I was standing on the banks looking at this amazing resource for the first time in my life going, "Shit, this is hot stuff."

M.O'R.: What were some of the CPO's in particular that ...

M.H.: Well, I'm trying to remember now. It seems to me the Sherwood - there was a CPO down by Sherwood that was right on the river. And I'm not sure about the others, but I know there were a few. I honestly can't - I'd have to go look at the maps.

M.O'R.: Was Jackson Bottom part of what you were doing?

M.H.: No, that - Jackson Bottom came later, and I can't remember the year, but I do remember getting a phone call from - probably Gene Herb, I would guess, who was then with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. He's retired now. Lives in Forest Grove. And maybe - actually, Jim Harp, I think, too. I went out and did a little trip with Jim and a guy who actually wound up doing some volunteer construction work at Audubon, whose name I'm embarrassed to say I can't remember now. And they sort of described their vision for the area and said, "Wouldn't this be cool?" and I went, "Yeah, it would be great."

I actually think at that time they suggested that I not get too involved in it because they didn't want it to appear that Audubon was controlling things or it was our idea, because it wasn't, it was their idea. So I just backed off until they were ready to go with some kind of plan, and then I, you know, participated on some advisory committee when it got going.

M.O'R.: Okay. Well, we could leap into the Tualatin as a subject, but maybe we should just save it until next time since we're getting close to that 10:30 hour.

M.H.: Yeah. I think that probably would be best because I'm feeling pressure to go get my testimony together, and I've got to go to Metro and look at some maps and -.

M.O'R.: Sure. That's fine with me, too. Thanks a lot.

[end of side one]

MICHAEL HOUCK

TAPE 2, Side 2

February 9, 1996

M.O'R.: This is Michael O'Rourke for the Washington County Historical Society continuing the oral history with Mike Houck on February 9th, 1996.

I just wanted to start off by maybe following up a little bit on a couple things you said last night, a couple things we talked about briefly. One was that you got this grant - your first exposure to the Tualatin was when you wrote the grant and got the grant to do the wildlife inventories out in Washington County. I wonder if you would just, to finish that story off, describe the process of taking a wildlife inventory - maybe a day in the life of a wildlife inventory-taker. What exactly do you mean when you take a wildlife inventory?

M.H.: Well, first of all, the program is part of Oregon's statewide land use planning program. Each county and city is supposed to conduct what's known as a Goal 5 inventory. Goal 5 is one of 19 statewide goals, several - the latter two or three apply only to the coast, so the first 16 or so apply across the state. And in fact that process is undergoing review and change as we speak in Salem.

But at that point I was contacted by Larry Swart, who still works for Washington County. He was a planner at that point. I'm not sure what department he's in right now. At any rate, what you do - or what I did was take maps that county planners had superimposed, and the scales varied like 1 inch equals 400 feet, and they

superimposed flood plains and some of the forested areas on those maps. In fact, I just rediscovered them a week ago.

M.O'R.: You mentioned that last time.

M.H.: Recently. Paul Ketcham found them in our files. It would be fun to go back and look through those.

And what I did, then, was take those maps into the field and walk the streams and check out the forested areas and write down my best professional judgment regarding the significance. And one of the tests that the statewide planning goal, Goal 5, requires the local jurisdictions to do is to determine whether it's significant fish and wildlife habitat or significant wetlands, significant scenic resources, archeological resources, whatever they may be. There's a whole laundry list. Unfortunately, it's literally a grab-bag that toward the end of the process they said, "Well, let's just throw that in with - in Goal 5 with fish and wildlife habitat, scenic resources, archeological and historic resources - in fact, that's where any of the concerns about historic buildings or whatever is in that same goal. Wilderness, you name it.

Well, the tendency at the local level is to focus primarily on wildlife habitat, which is what I did for nine community planning organizations, community participation organizations, CPO's. And over about a three-week period - I was given a very short period of time to do this work, which is one reason why it was really pretty cursory. In my opinion it was a first cut at what should have been a much more comprehensive inventory at some point, which I'm hoping will still occur.

It rained every day, virtually, so it was not the most pleasant work. But at any rate, I went out, wrote notes on the field

maps, gave them to Washington County, and so they had their set and then I made a set for myself. And the intent is that the County was to use those maps to determine which areas should be protected from development or there should be some restrictions on development so they're protected.

M.O'R.: And then you go out and like literally count water fowl and ...

M.H.: No. It was more - it was habitat-oriented. If you have ...

M.O'R.: Habitat-oriented. I see.

M.H.: Focusing on, "This is a really nice riparian zone," meaning vegetation which grows adjacent to water, which in this area is primarily Oregon ash and cedar and -. See, if you know the species of vegetation in that habitat, then you have a pretty good feeling for what wildlife would use it. So you don't look - you know, it's basically a surrogate -. You try and protect the wildlife; if you don't protect the habitat, wildlife are not going to be there.

M.O'R.: Right. So you just traveled around Washington County, then, and took a look at all of the natural areas that hadn't been encroached upon too much yet by developers?

M.H.: Right. And actually the emphasis was on stream corridors and wetlands.

M.O'R.: Hence your becoming familiar with the Tualatin, I guess?

M.H.: Right.

M.O'R.: That was your first contact with the Tualatin, and that would have been in what year?

M.H.: '82.

M.O'R.: '82, okay. So that was after the building moratorium that the State slapped on Washington County in the early 70's.

M.H.: Yeah.

M.O'R.: And after USA was created - a few years after their first big plants went on line. So I imagine the river was probably already turning around at least at that point. What was your sense of the Tualatin at that time?

M.H.: Well, again, my sense of the Tualatin - and I feel the same way about the Columbia Slough - is that I wasn't personally that aware of the constituents in the water column. I tend to look at that riparian habitat and the adjacent wetlands and the overall physical appearance of the water body, in this case, the Tualatin. And to my eye, it represented a really pleasant place to go canoeing and kayaking. So I in fact spent a lot of my time and energy trying to convince people that the Tualatin is actually an amazing positive resource for the region that should be used in appropriate ways for passive recreation - canoeing, kayaking, that sort of thing, and bird watching and whatever.

So I - from the day I saw it I really fell in love with it. I think it's a wonderful river. Not to diminish the water quality problems; they're certainly there. But when I saw it, it was from a - well, originally from the surveys, but soon thereafter in a canoe, and I was pretty impressed.

M.O'R.: Yeah. It is nice to see it right at the water level from a kayak or a canoe.

M.H.: Right. And then I was of course totally blown away when I started working on that brochure when I went to the headwaters and saw what a different river it was at the headwaters.

M.O'R.: When was this?

M.H.: Well, this was actually relatively recently. Four years ago - three years.

M.O'R.: Yeah, I've never been up there, but I'm going to try to get up there in the course of this project.

M.H.: It's really wonderful.

M.O'R.: Let's see. The other thing - well, there were a lot of things that occurred in the 70's vis-a-vis the Tualatin, the other one being the creation of the Hagg Lake Reservoir. Now, were you an observer of any of these events?

M.H.: No. I was oblivious. See, I moved back to Portland in '69, from Ames. Went to graduate school through '72. Worked at OMSI from '72 to '77. So my first interaction, indirectly, with the Tualatin was when I taught at Oregon Episcopal School, '77 to '79 - vis-a-vis Fanno Creek and the wetlands in Fanno Creek. So - but I still didn't have an understanding of the relationship between Fanno and the Tualatin River. That didn't come until I started doing these inventories. So up until then I was either in Eastern Oregon or in one of the tributaries.

M.O'R.: How much of the Tualatin have you canoed or kayaked?

M.H.: Well, not really that much, when it comes right down to it. Just the lower middle section, from - oh, I've been on the river from upstream of Sherwood down to Stafford Road, and that stretch.

M.O'R.: I've done a piece of that stretch myself. Not quite that far. What do you see when you're actually on the river? When I was out there, I saw quite a few birds.

M.H.: Mm-hmm. It's a great area for birding. I can't remember if I've seen any river otter there, but I'm sure they're there. We've got them in the Slough and in the Willamette. You know, green herons and pileated woodpeckers.

In fact, one of the funniest incidents that occurred - I don't know if you've heard this one. Gary Krahmer was there, I know, and the rest of USA staff, Linda Kelly and others. We were standing preparing to take the County Commissioners, Roy Rogers and Bonnie Hays and John Meek and the crew - did I say Roy Rogers?

M.O'R.: Yeah.

M.H.: And we were standing on this farm field getting ready to put in, and a pileated woodpecker flew in, vocalizing, and landed on a tree right over our heads. And Channel 8 was there and Channel 2, and there was somebody from the *Oregonian*. And we all looked up, and about three seconds later, this gun goes off. It's John Meek. He was dressed in his buckskins and had a muzzle-loader, and had just shot it. He wasn't shooting at the bird, but this huge explosion, and of course the pileated takes off screaming his head off, and everybody looks around aghast. It was like, "Oh, my god, what was that?" And it was John Meek being John Meek. Which I don't know if you know him.

M.O'R.: No, I don't know him.

M.H.: Well, you know he's running for Congress now? He was a county commissioner, and he's a character, let's put it that way. At any rate, people - everyone there was totally chagrined. You

know, they all turned and looked at me like, "What's Mike going to do?" Like I was going to turn the gun on him or something. So I'll never forget pileated woodpeckers on the Tualatin River, as will none of the - Gary was there. Next time you talk to him, ask him if he remembers that little incident.

M.O'R.: And what was the purpose of this gathering?

M.H.: Oh, we were trying - just taking the commissioners down the Tualatin so they could see it for themselves from the river, because of course, you know, you can sit around and talk about a resource and managing a resource till you're blue in face. If you're not on it, in the case of a river, or you know, see it yourself with your own eyes, it's difficult to get people committed to doing something like cleaning the river up. Once you're on it, then you can appreciate it a lot more, and you have some emotional, personal investment in it.

So you know, the purpose of that trip was just to take them down the Tualatin. So there we are ...

M.O'R.: And Meek brings along his gun.

M.H.: Yeah. It was pretty amazing.

So you see bird-wise most of the species you would expect in a - in at least portions of the river there is still relatively intact riparian habitat and wetlands adjacent, so you're going to see in the brushy edges, you know, green-backed herons. And of course in the trees all the usual suspects, the warblers and so forth.

M.O'R.: And the log jams, I guess, are also ...

M.H.: Well, see, I haven't seen those. I haven't been far enough upstream to really - you know, there are some downed trees

in that lower section that I've canoed, but the real so-called mess is further upstream. And of course, those are a natural component of a river, too, although it sounds like there are areas where it's pretty dammed up.

M.O'R.: Well, they represent I guess habitat for beaver and other ...

M.H.: Right. In fact, the State has gone through a total reversal of its policies. At one point they were having the forest products folks taking trees out of streams - what's known as large woody debris out of streams to clean them up. Well, of course that wiped out all the fish habitat. Now they've got them putting large woody debris back into the streams, and in some cases intentionally and then in other cases trying to protect a zone along the river or stream so that trees eventually naturally fall into the stream or river and create that important habitat. The conifers are particularly important for that because they're very long-lived. Like a cedar tree will remain in the water for 2-, 3-, 400 years before it decomposes.

M.O'R.: Actually, I've talked to some property owners along the Tualatin in doing research for this project - we'll probably get around to interviewing a couple of them - but one man that I talked to was quite - I don't think he appreciates some of the things you've just said about the trees in the river because he was telling me that the State, or some organization anyway, was on him because he cuts down trees that look like they're about to fall in the river, the ones that start to lean over, and he defends the practice on the grounds that he hasn't lost any ground, because when the tree goes it takes a certain amount of the river bank with

it. And so he was quite angry at the State for telling him that he can't do that.

M.H.: Well, that's a classic example of, you know, "I have the right to do whatever I want with my land, at the expense of other resources." I don't know that particular piece of ground, so it's hard to judge, but in general removal of riparian vegetation is bad for the system, for that stream or river system.

M.O'R.: Even if the tree is going to go anyway?

M.H.: Yeah. Right. That's part of the overall dynamic of an aquatic system, and that's what people - the problem we've got with the Willamette River and the Tualatin and local streams is they are dynamic systems, and they change over time. And of course we have our concept of "this is my property," and you do not want that line to change. Well, a river does not respect that, and a stream. And the more you try to harness a river or a stream - my favorite adage is "Nature bats last." And you know, what you do on your property is going to affect people both upstream and downstream, so there are obligations, in my opinion moral obligations, and in some cases probably legal, and there should probably be some more legal ramifications for people who decide to alter their property that has a negative impact on folks who live up and downstream, or downslope, for that matter.

Yeah, I'm sure there are plenty of people that -. I know it's - I sat through the Senate Bill 1010 process for the last year and a half, and there's a lot of - and I don't use this in a pejorative way; I use it in a literal sense - there's a lot of ignorance out there on the part of some of the farmers in terms of how rivers and streams function, and the importance of that riparian zone, what we

call a riparian zone, which I admit is - varies with the resource. Some places it could be 10 to 20 feet wide; other places it could be 2,000 feet wide. We have a long ways to go in educating people about those resources.

M.O'R.: Well, of course right now we're experiencing flooding throughout Oregon, really.

M.H.: People's attention has been gotten. There's an excellent editorial - I haven't read the whole thing, but I know who wrote it, Stan Gregory in the *Oregonian* this morning. You should read it. He talks about how ill-advised it is to try to control rivers.

M.O'R.: Is there any aspect of this flooding that has to do with development per se?

M.H.: Well, there's no question the volume of water entering the Willamette is a function of a combination of factors. Obviously deforestation is a factor. How big a factor it is, I don't know. All the ag land on the Willamette could actually hold a lot of the flood waters of the Willamette, but the river has been - and this is true to some extent of the Tualatin as well - has been trained so much by revetments and channelized and straightened, that the river has been disconnected from the land that it flows through in many respects. So that what used to happen in the Willamette Valley was when the flood waters came they would spread out over the landscape, over what is now farmland. Well, obviously if you take all of that previously effective flood storage capacity and narrow it down to the channel of the river, the water is going to go somewhere, which is downstream. So of course downstream the impacts are even greater.

And then in the case of the Portland area, along Johnson Creek, Fanno Creek, a tributary to the Tualatin, as you increase the impervious or hard surface in that watershed, of course it's not rocket science that the flashiness of streams, meaning the peaks, the peak flows, is going to increase, and people are going to get flooded. So yeah, very definitely development exacerbates flooding in particular areas due to increased impervious surface so that water can't percolate into the ground.

Of course now the ground is saturated, so not only is the water running off parking lots and roofs and so forth, but the ground itself is filled to capacity, so it's all going to run off.

But that doesn't - we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that flooding is a natural phenomenon which should occur. It should continue to occur. It's always occurred; it should occur. If you're going to have healthy, functioning systems in the Tualatin or the Willamette, that flooding is an important process.

M.O'R.: I guess that's what the issue of the *Naturalist* you just gave me probably talks about?

M.H.: Yes.

M.O'R.: Well, back to the 80's and the Tualatin. It was roughly I guess 1985, somewhere around there, that the first - I guess the first of two lawsuits was filed. The second one came shortly thereafter and was related to it. One was against the EPA forcing the federal government to enforce the Clean Water Act on the Tualatin, and then shortly after that there was a lawsuit filed directed against the Unified Sewerage Agency, and they were filed by Northwest Environmental Defense Center. Jack Smith was then the president, and there were lots of other people that we've at least

touched on briefly here that were involved in that. I just wondered what your own involvement was and what your observations were about that.

M.H.: Zip. Honestly, I didn't even know there was a lawsuit being filed.

M.O'R.: Really?

M.H.: I actually - I probably had some peripheral knowledge through Jack Churchill, because it was about that time, as a matter of fact, that Jack Churchill called me at Audubon, and my recollection is he may have been trying to get us to get involved in the lawsuit with him. I'm not sure about that. But I know he took me to task in ways only Jack Churchill is capable of. You haven't talked with him?

M.O'R.: I haven't talked to him yet. He's on my list.

M.H.: He's a character. You've got to talk to him. And he told me that I was pissing in the wind, basically, working on wildlife habitat, all these Goal 5 inventories and so forth, that the real action was with the Clean Water Act, and if I had any intelligence I would get on board and utilize that as a tool.

And the interesting thing is he was absolutely right, in retrospect. Although if I hadn't been out doing the wildlife habitat inventories in terms of the sorts of things that I'm concerned about, a lot of good things would not have happened, so I don't regret having tried to utilize the Goal 5 process to the maximum extent I could, and of course citizen lawsuits are another tool. I typically don't - I don't have any legal expertise, number one. Audubon Society, while we have sued on various forest-related issues and some others, generally does not get actively involved in

lawsuits per se. The work I do is focused much more on community involvement and community awareness and land use planning.

So we didn't - we were going down parallel paths, I guess I would say. The Jack and Jack team and Karl Anuta and the rest of them were out here using the Clean Water Act saying, "You guys are not protecting the water quality of the Tualatin. You've got to clean your act up or we're going to sue you to make you do it." Which was great. A lot of things would not have happened had they not done that.

But I was really not that aware of that whole process in '86. By then - by '86 I had moved on to doing wildlife habitat inventories in Beaverton and the rest of the region - Gresham, Milwaukie, West Linn, Gladstone, City of Portland. So my focus was beginning to be more regional in nature. And then by '88 - 87-88 is when we started the whole green spaces effort. So the Tualatin as a focus for me was receding, and the regional perspective was picking up steam. Understanding the Tualatin was a very important component of that regional picture.

M.O'R.: Well, looking at it in retrospect - well, it sounds like you already acknowledged that the lawsuit, you know, produced some positive results?

M.H.: Oh, yeah. Absolutely.

M.O'R.: But there were some interesting issues, I think, involved in that in that, you know, they went through the process a few years earlier of - when the Clean Water Act was being implemented, of you know, providing federal grants to USA and building these huge treatment plants, and supposedly that was, you know, going to fix the problem. And then the lawsuit brought them to

task because they weren't really looking at the actual contaminant levels, nutrient levels in the Tualatin itself. They were just looking at the effluent from the plants.

M.H.: Right.

M.O'R.: So in retrospect do you see any repercussions or fallout from that that has changed things, changed the way people do business?

M.H.: Well, fortunately yes. Of course we need to be concerned about what sewage treatment plants are putting into the river and the fact that there are sewage treatment plants that are in fact treating water before it gets discharged. But the bigger - not the bigger - another equally important issue is what's coming off the landscape, what are we contributing in a non-point source to our water bodies, vis-a-vis farming activities, agricultural practices, forest practices, and urban development? And my interpretation of what you just posited to me is that it isn't enough to simply worry about what you're putting through a pipe into the river, but what you're contributing overall for the landscape.

M.O'R.: I think that was the point that Jack Smith especially likes to make.

M.H.: Right. Which a lot of people resist taking responsibility for.

M.O'R.: Right. Well, in fact you told me last time - that was another thing I wanted to follow up a little bit on - that you were involved in a process with the agricultural community. I don't know if it was specifically in the Tualatin Valley ...

M.H.: Oh, yeah. Actually, it was.

M.O'R.: ... and that you'd held a bunch of meetings with them trying to pursue a course of action that I guess was designed not to ruffle too many feathers but hopefully would still be effective. In fact, it was going to be education and voluntary compliance.

M.H.: Right.

M.O'R.: Can you tell me a little bit more about what your vision of what should have happened there would have been?

M.H.: Yeah. Well, there's state legislation, Senate Bill 1010, that directed the ag community to clean up its act with respect to what it was contributing to the Tualatin, and I was asked to serve on that committee. I actually think there was a lot of mutual education that occurred in the process, so I don't think it was a total waste of time, but the I think anticipated product and the actual product was to be education and voluntary action on the part of the ag community, which I bought into and went along with throughout the process.

M.O'R.: With reservations, or did you think ...

M.H.: No, actually I think we need really strong regulatory programs, laws, to accomplish a lot of our objectives, but we also need to, I think, move more into the arena of stewardship, the concept of stewardship and educating people and trying to get them to do the right thing.

Now, we know that does not work in all cases, and maybe in most cases, but I was willing to give that a shot. And the thing that I was most - that I was disappointed with in that process was the reluctance on the part of the ag community to impose fees on itself to raise money to provide the staff to carry out the educational component of that program. It's fine to say you've got this

great educational program that's going to go out and work with the farmers and talk to them about practices that would reduce pollution from their farm fields into the Tualatin; if you don't provide the personnel to carry out those educational programs, though, then what's the point? And that was the disappointing end of that process.

[end of tape]