

PEER Transcript
National Meeting Regarding U.S. Bureau of Land Management
Land Exchanges

Background

Below are 1) a partial summary of a national meeting between BLM land appraisers on September 12, 2002, and 2) a list of parties participating in the meeting, and 3) a near verbatim transcription of the discussion approximately 56 minutes and 25 seconds into the national meeting. Those speaking are noted. The times below are approximate. The quality of recording is at times very poor. Much of the dialogue is obscured by ambient noise. Time markers indicate where the noise occurs.

National Invitees, September 12, 2002

Nancy Ortiz, California—speaks substantially

Don Shepard, Wyoming—may speak substantially—there are two (2) Dons on the recording

Al Wagner, Colorado—speaks minimally

Shawn Redfield, Arizona

Helen Honse, Oregon

Phyllis Brosz, Montana

Richard Rawson, Utah

Richard Johnson, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Don Dunn—may speak substantially— there are two (2) Dons on the recording

Paul Rose, Nevada—speaks minimally

Dave—does most of the speaking and leads the call

Summary and Times

Beginning Side 1

00:00:00—Begin Side 1

00:8:30—Noise clears

Male speaker expresses his feeling of a personal attack and pain from it (?). Decided he couldn't handle it for himself and the Bureau. He would like Don to handle this for the bureau because he is too personally involved.

00:10:35—Noise Returns

00:11:47—Noise Clears

Don says it is a difficult Report. The Appraisal Foundation Report is biased and does not include support for BLM. Appraisal Foundation says they don't include support because other readers might see it.

00:12:46—Noise returns

Don-APPRAISAL FOUNDATION says there are organizational problems with the BLM. APPRAISAL FOUNDATION recommends a national agency to appraise BLM and all federal agencies, but report is vague.

APPRAISAL FOUNDATION interim solution is to appoint a compliance person from DOJ to oversee BLM.

1. General recommendations for regulations
2. National Agency and stop gaps
3. There needs to be further investigations, and APPRAISAL FOUNDATION does not want to do it.

Recommend a moratorium on exchanges.

This is a biased and vague report with unsupported claims that might be true.

Paul—what is the authority and motivation for this report from APPRAISAL FOUNDATION

Don—OIG report and land swaps near St. George. BLM contracted with APPRAISAL FOUNDATION.

00:24:02—Nancy—“Do we have to pay them, for this.” From a contracting stand point, there has to be a certain standard . . .

Don—I don't know, but it is being looked into.

00:31:48—Discussion of an agreement with APPRAISAL FOUNDATION to add 6 pages of “clarifying revisions” to the report

00:31:54—Noise clears

00:32:14—Noise returns

There is no assurance that they will make the changes we want, and there is not enough time for them to do that because it is a final report.

Report attacks management as being disorganized.

The report is finished, so there is nothing we can do.

We will have a whole lot of answering to do if this goes public.

00:42:19—Noise Clears

The only avenue that could be used right now is to say that they did not comply with the tasks, #1 and #3 (presumably to stop the report from going public)

00:33:54—Noise Returns

00:45:54—BLM management will not accept the report because it is so critical of BLM management.

00:46:15—[sounds like] peer articles or in the Washington Post
Noise Clears

End Side 1

Begin Side 2

00:46:57—Noise returns

Nancy—it seems like they weren't listening to us; it is based on limited info.

Talk about staff interviews—what were our staff people saying?

00:48:54—Al—What if there is some truth in the report and they have evidence of it?
Should we be concerned about that.

Don—Yeah, that is a problem. We need to see their evidence. We need more specificity to refute their “general consensus”.

00:53:05—Noise Clears

00:53:09—Noise returns

00:53:55—If we just stay on our schedule, it will be clear that the report is rough and unsubstantiated

00:54:15—noise clears

Don—we don't want to be guilty of something that will sharpen the knife that goes into our back.

Nancy—hopefully people will see that the report is biased.

[N.B. The following italicized text is a near verbatim transcript of a section of this call beginning at 9 minutes and 14 seconds in from the start of side 2 (approximately 56 minutes and twenty-five seconds from the beginning of side one). The names of the speakers are not certain which is why they are also given numbers]

Transcript

00:09:14

Speaker #1(AI): I think there's gonna be that faction out there that when and if this thing becomes public, that there will be that perception that everything they've said is true . . .

Speaker #2 (Nancy): Right

Speaker #3 (Dave): absolutely true

Speaker #2 (Nancy): absolutely from the public, from the public

Speaker #1(AI): and you know then we're in deep doodoo.

Speaker #4 (Rawson): well, there's enough truth in some those things that it won't be hard for them to make a case. You know this, you know folks, this san Rafael issue out here is just absolutely a gem for them to hone in on because uh there was absolute manipulation in the Washington Office by the numbers in the Washington Exchange team of what we did out here. Absolutely it was just manipulated for the benefit of the negotiating team in this major exchange and uh oh I was scared to death that they would hone in on this and use this as an example . . . that's where they're headed with this. You know, uh there are more problems with that than you can ever believe. And I'm I'm very shocked and disappointed uh that you know the manipulation the the misleading of us that took place back in in Washington and asking Dave to basically bow out and keep out of this and and uh I I I mean I could take 15 minutes here and I don't want to . . .

Speaker #3 (Dave): Yeah

Speaker #4 (Rawson): to go over all the issues but, there's major issues and its still this bill is still going forward and there's so many holes in this. And there's lies, and inu[endos] I mean absolute misrepresentations and flat out bald faced lies about what we did and what we didn't do that uh you know it didn't take a genius to come in here investigate this to find the problems.

Speaker #3 (Dave): But but but the thing is we've gotta stay away I I I I mean we as appraisers, we're gonna be hurting we we we 've got the whistle blowers, we've followed up on San Rafael on on some things . . .

Speaker #4 (Rawson): Yeah well that was a total cover up because they said they were gonna follow up and then they came out with there most latest briefing and absolutely

ignored everything, everything that we had submitted to them in showing what the problems were. It was totally ignored.

Speaker #3 (Dave): And then, we get this OIG report and its gonna look like we as a group are insubordinate, to management and that we're just dissidents, and and I mean um I I am afraid that's where we're going. And that, that's a very uncomfortable feeling. Its not good for our organization . . .

[N.B. end verbatim transcription. There remains approximately 50 minutes more recorded dialogue]

01:00:04—Male—4000 acres of coal in San Rafael that everyone forgot to value

01:01:40—talk about terminating the contract with APPRAISAL FOUNDATION, for cause or convenience of the government.

01:02:28—Talk about the six (6) pages to be added to the report. Speaker reads a paragraph—the report should be supported by facts and not replete with inaccurate generalizations.

01:03:26—Noise returns

01:03:44—Don—we are hoping the trustees somehow get back to the bureau and find a convenient way to 'close it out'. Let's throw it back real hard and hope to get a response, which so far we haven't

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Male—I don't think that recommendations will stick, they will be overshadowed by the DOJ stuff.

A name is mentioned—Donald Foot who is described as a very capable contracting officer in Denver.

01:06:15—Don-- if we terminate the contract, it looks bad for us politically

01:06:29—noise clears

Nancy-report was supposed to be constructive and positive

01:08:29—Noise returns

01:10:34—the report mentions Utah records (1996) that were not available.

001:11:57—Al—there is a case file that has to have that stuff in it.

Don—the case file in St. George is missing the master appraisal

Dave—Someone cleaned out Ted Stevenson’s office and no one knows what happened to those records or where they are now.

01:14:09—Nancy-this is a clear cut contracting issue.

01:15:23—It is likely that they did not meet tasks #1 and #3, and they went way beyond their scope by bringing in San Rafael.

01:16:20—they wasted our money by going beyond their scope. They gave us stuff we didn’t want and not the stuff we wanted.

01:16:40—noise clears

handwringing: our jobs are in danger.

01:19:42—noise returns

handwringing

01:25:33—noise clears

handwringing

01:27:10—Noise returns

01:31:14—noise clears

Dave—this has an impact on San Rafael and managers. We can try to convince managers, but it is their show.

01:32:04—try not to overreact. Keep it under your hat.

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01:33:08—Noise returns

01:33:52—noise clears

01:35:47—noise returns

01:36:05—Dave—at the political level, they may see this as just a small blip

Dave—We are in a box, and there is nothing we can do about it

01:38:16—noise clears

01:39:14—Dave—I prefer that nothing go forward at the state director level at this point. I am afraid we might be politically sacrificed.

01:42:54—Dave—we don't want to pressure any trustees.

01:44:52—Nancy—I have good news about the gold fields thing, that is, the friends of the desert are going to be paid off to go away, and that we couldn't have made that deal if we hadn't done such a good job on that appraisal.

01:46:53—*End Side 2*

Begin Side 3

Nancy—talking about the gold fields and value. Eagle Mountain may be a different case, because the value creeps up as you get closer to the income stream.

01:51:54—call ends.