

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

William S. Condit



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Interview Conducted and Edited by:
Donald B. Seney in 1995
Emeritus, California State University-
Sacramento
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“There were very few nay-sayers to the way the bill was being crafted, save for some people on the Newlands Project, whose real concerns, as I just said, ran so much deeper than that agreement. It was ESA . . . and/or Native American trust responsibilities . . .” 34

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Even then I was with the minority . . . on the committee staff. I think Barbara kept me on what’s called shared staff, so I was considered a partial employee of hers so I could go to Nevada on her travel office dollars when necessary. 36

“ . . . remember . . . a large part of what we’re talking about was the codification of the divvying up of the river . . .” 39

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“ . . . if you look at the election returns from November, 1990 in Churchill County, she certainly did no worse than she always does out there, which is actually quite well. If you look at Senator Reid’s returns out there,

they're not so good. . . ." 42

“That was the point of my story about unanimous consent [U.C.] necessary in the wee hours. It literally was 2 a.m. in the morning. . . . We were in what's called the Speaker's Lobby, just off the floor, and George Miller came out of the Democratic doors and Barbara came out of the Republican doors George Miller threw this big bear hug around Barbara. I've never seen that before nor since. It's seldom that the two of them agreed on that. . . ." 43

“ . . . I'm sure she'll say that, all in all, it was still the thing to do, and she's hopeful that these continuing negotiations, if you will, can bring some measure of . . . equity, if you will, that the T-C-I-D, particularly the group that spun off to make the Newlands Water Protective Association, those kind of folks, you know, as I said to Barbara, ‘What we really need to do is pray for rain out in the Sierras, because, boy, those reservoirs need to be refilled.’ . . .” 46

STATEMENT OF DONATION
OF ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW OF
WILLIAM S. CONDIT

1. In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms, conditions, and restrictions set forth in this instrument, I, WILLIAM S. CONDIT, (hereinafter referred to as "the Donor"), of WASHINGTON, D.C., do hereby give, donate, and convey to the National Archives and Records Administration (hereinafter referred to as "the National Archives"), acting for and on behalf of the United States of America, all of my rights and title to, and interest in the information and responses (hereinafter referred to as "the Donated Materials") provided during the interview conducted on NOVEMBER 8, 1995, at WASHINGTON, D.C. and prepared for deposit with the National Archives and Records Administration in the following format: tape recording and transcript. This donation includes, but is not limited to, all copyright interests I now possess in the Donated Materials.
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Date: 29 June '98

Signed: 
WILLIAM S. CONDIT

INTERVIEWER: DONALD B. SENEY

Bureau of Reclamation History Program
Newlands Project Series Oral history
William S. Condit

Having determined that the materials donated above by WILLIAM S. CONDIT are appropriate for preservation as evidence of the United States Government's organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, and transactions, and considering it to be in the public interest to accept these materials for deposit with the National Archives and Records Administration, I accept this gift on behalf of the United States of America, subject to the terms, conditions, and restrictions set forth in the above instrument.

Date: _____

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**Bureau of Reclamation History Program
Newlands Project Series Oral history
William S. Condit**

Introduction

In 1988, Reclamation began to create a history program. While headquartered in Denver, the history program was developed as a bureau-wide program.

One component of Reclamation's history program is its oral history activity. The primary objectives of Reclamation's oral history activities are: preservation of historical data not normally available through Reclamation records (supplementing already available data on the whole range of Reclamation's history); making the preserved data available to researchers inside and outside Reclamation.

In the case of the Newlands Project, the senior historian consulted the regional director to design a special research project to take an all around look at one Reclamation project. The regional director suggested the Newlands Project, and the research program occurred between 1994 and signing of the Truckee River Operating Agreement in 2008. Professor Donald B. Seney of the Government Department at California State University - Sacramento (now emeritus and living in South Lake Tahoe, California) undertook this work. The Newlands Project, while a small- to medium-sized Reclamation project, represents a microcosm of issues found throughout Reclamation: water transportation over great distances; three Native American groups with sometimes conflicting

interests; private entities with competitive and sometimes misunderstood water rights; many local governments with growing water needs; Fish and Wildlife Service programs competing for water for endangered species in Pyramid Lake and for viability of the Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge to the east of Fallon, Nevada; and Reclamation's original water user, the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District, having to deal with modern competition for some of the water supply that originally flowed to farms and ranches in its community.

The senior historian of the Bureau of Reclamation developed and directs the oral history program. Questions, comments, and suggestions may be addressed to the senior historian.

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**Bureau of Reclamation History Program
Newlands Project Series Oral history
William S. Condit**

**Oral History Interview
William S. Condit¹**

Seney: Today is November 9, 1995. My name is Donald
Seney. I'm with Mr. William S. Condit, on the
Committee on

Condit: [Natural] Resources.

Seney: . . . [Natural] Resources of the House of
Representatives. Why don't you give me a brief
biography, Bill, and then tell me about the
settlement legislation.

**Professional Background as a Geologist and
Work Experience**

1. This manuscript was mailed to Mr. Condit on September 3, 1996. The cover letter that accompanied the manuscript included the following: "We would like the enclosed back thirty days from the day you receive it, I hope that will not be inconvenient. If I do not receive the edited manuscript back from you in sixty days I will assume that you wish to make no corrections, and we will proceed with publication." As of February 1998 no corrected manuscript had been received from Mr. Condit. DBS.

**Bureau of Reclamation History Program
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Condit: All right. Well, actually I'm a geologist.

**Worked for the Bureau of Land Management in
the Department of the Interior**

I was working for the Interior Department, Bureau of Land Management after having worked in the West, [I]² worked in Washington, D.C., for them in mining law administration, [and] came to The [Capitol] Hill.

2. Note that in the text of these interviews, as opposed to headings, information in parentheses, (), is actually on the tape. Information in brackets, [], has been added to the tape either by the editor to clarify meaning or at the request of the interviewee in order to correct, enlarge, or clarify the interview as it was originally spoken. Words have sometimes been struck out by editor or interviewee in order to clarify meaning or eliminate repetition. In the case of strikeouts, that material has been printed at 50% density to aid in reading the interviews but assuring that the struckout material is readable.

The transcriber and editors also have removed some extraneous words such as false starts and repetitions without indicating their removal. The meaning of the interview has not been changed by this editing.

**Bureau of Reclamation History Program
Newlands Project Series Oral history
William S. Condit**

**Met Congresswoman Barbara Vucanovich While
on Loan to the Committee on Natural Resources**

[I] met Congresswoman [Barbara] Vucanovich
when I was basically a loaner to what was then
the Committee on Natural Resources.

Seney: You were being loaned.

**Loaned by BLM to Work for Representative Larry
E. Craig of Idaho**

Condit: Right. Paid for by the agency, but working for
then Representative Larry [E.] Craig of Idaho,
who was the ranking Republican member on the
Mining Subcommittee, and I came up to provide
some expertise to the committee staff.

Seney: This is not an unusual arrangement, is it?

Condit: No, no.

Seney: The Department of Interior does this on a regular basis?

Condit: Yes, and that was during the [George H. W.] Bush³ administration, right at the very beginning, Senator Craig, then House member Larry Craig, asked the department to send me up on a detail. I met the congresswoman, who was a member of the subcommittee then.

Applied for an Opening on the Mining and Minerals Subcommittee of the Committee on Natural Resources Chaired by Barbara Vucanovich

A few months later, she had an opening on another subcommittee on the Committee on Natural Resources. I applied for the job, and after

3. George H. W. Bush was president from 1989 to 1993,

several filters, she interviewed me.

During His Interview They Talked about Mining and Yucca Mountain Issues

We didn't actually talk about the Newlands
Project issue at all; it was more about mining and
Yucca Mountain issues, but she hired me and I
went to work for her on the committee.

Seney: She was the ranking member of the committee?

Condit: No, she was the ranking member on one of the
subcommittees, but the bottom line is that I
worked for her on all committee-related issues.

Staffed Barbara Vucanovich's Subcommittee for Senator Harry Reid's Bill on the Newlands Project

Since the bill⁴ that Senator [Harry M.] Reid had

4. Public Law 101-618 contains two acts--The Fallon Paiute
Shoshone Tribal Settlement Act and the Truckee-Carson-Pyramid Lake
(continued...)

introduced was referred to Energy Natural Resources on the Senate side, and over here it was the Committee on Natural Resources, that meant I was her staffer for that issue.

Congresswoman Vucanovich Submits Her Own Settlement Bill

“She actually put in a companion bill over here in the House that varied slightly from Senator Reid’s bill. . . .”

Seney: She actually put in a companion bill over here in the House that varied slightly from Senator Reid’s bill.

Condit: Yes.

Seney: You had a hand in that, did you?

Condit: Yes.

4. (...continued)
Water Rights Settlement Act.

**Bureau of Reclamation History Program
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“ . . . we had talked to people at the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District (TCID) about . . . what to do . . . to—I don’t want to say counter Senator Reid’s bill, but to have a different position out there. . . .”

Yes, I did have a hand in that, and we had talked to people at the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District (TCID) about that effort, and basically what to do parliamentary-wise, if you will, to—I don’t want to say counter Senator Reid’s bill, but to have a different position out there.

“ . . . practically all of the legislative effort . . . on the bill was done on the Senate side. I . . . recall . . . there was one hearing on the House side that George Miller’s Subcommittee on Water and Power held . . . but it really seemed like it was more of an oversight hearing than it was . . . a mark-up of Barbara Vucanovich’s bill, and Senator Reid’s bill had not yet passed out of the [Senate] committee . . . ”

Now, I will tell you, though, Don, that practically all of the legislative effort that went through on the bill was done on the Senate side. I seem to recall that during my tenure with Barbara, there was one hearing on the House side that George Miller's Subcommittee on Water and Power held, as I recall. Yes, there was one on the House side, but it really seemed like it was more of an oversight hearing than it was less a mark-up of Barbara Vucanovich's bill, and Senator Reid's bill had not yet passed out of the committee and the Senate floor to be made an order to take up as a House bill, a Senate-passed bill referred to the House, at that juncture.

Seney: People urged me to talk to you because the opinion is—and I'm certain it's a sound one—without Congresswoman Vucanovich's support, active support, 101-618 would not really have passed. [Tape recorder turned off.]

I'm not sure where I was when the interruption came, but without Congresswoman Vucanovich's active support, the bill wouldn't have gotten anywhere. Am I right to understand that, that she went out of her way to support Senator Reid's bill?

**Congresswoman Vucanovich Reluctantly
Supported Public Law 101-618**

Condit: Well, yes. Frankly, it was somewhat grudgingly.

Seney: Tell me about that.

**“ . . . business interests in the Truckee Meadows . . .
 . decided that it was time, once and for all, to try
 to put some finality to these issues . . .**

Condit: There were factors at work. The group of business interests in the Truckee Meadows that decided that it was time, once and for all, to try to put some finality to these issues, was influential, I believe. Off the top of my head, they had an acronym for it, and I can't think of it now, but it's Truckee Meadows Business.

Seney: Chamber of Commerce Business, and labor groups were involved.

Condit: Exactly.

Seney: A coalition that I believe Senator Reid had helped to put together.

Condit: That may be, but, Don, I came into this when it was pretty far along already. Now, I did get files from my predecessor, who was a woman named Pam . It was Pam's job that I got, because Pam married and moved back out West. Pam Whitacre.

“ . . . there had been prior efforts made by Senator Paul Laxalt, for example, that always, at the end, cratered for one reason or another. . . .”

Then through talking with Barbara, I realized that there had been prior efforts made by Senator [Paul] Laxalt, for example, that always, at the end, cratered for one reason or another.

“ . . . it was only a few short weeks of trying to figure out what was going on in this issue before I realized that without extraordinary efforts, every effort would crater. It's a morass to have all of

those interests, the two states and an Indian Nation, at the same time, rivers that originate in one state and flow into another, but the Indian Nation feels it's not part of either state. And the endangered species angle to it, that sort of thing, that complicates it so dramatically. . . ."

But it was only a few short weeks of trying to figure out what was going on in this issue before I realized that without extraordinary efforts, every effort would crater. It's a morass to have all of those interests, the two states and an Indian Nation, at the same time, rivers that originate in one state and flow into another, but the Indian Nation feels it's not part of either state. And the endangered species angle to it, that sort of thing, that complicates it so dramatically.

Public Law 101-618 Passes the House at the Last

**Bureau of Reclamation History Program
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Possible Moment

But, yes, Barbara did end up supporting that, and some of the more savvy people in the area, if they knew the parliamentary rules, anyway, understand that this bill passed as the penultimate bill in the 101st Congress, and I was with Barbara on the floor at about 2 A.M. in the morning when the bill was brought over from the Senate, and unanimous consent [U.C.] was asked to take it up, without referring it to the House. Of course, it was the last day of that Congress.

“ . . . literally a week away from the election. Barbara had spoken with Congressman Miller, who was now the chairman of the committee, the full committee, and agreed that the U.C. was in order, and she would let this thing pass. . . . ”

We were literally a week away from the election. Barbara had spoken with Congressman Miller, who was now the chairman of the committee, the full committee, and agreed that the U.C. was in order, and she would let this thing pass.

“ . . . her posture then, and I believe it remains so, was that the sum of the good in the bill outweighed the few interests that to this day continue to believe that they have rights that were ignored. . . . ”

Again, her posture then, and I believe it remains so, was that the sum of the good in the bill outweighed the few interests that to this day continue to believe that they have rights that were ignored. They're irrigation farmers, Anglos, as they call them, on the Newlands Project.

Seney: In this last hours of the House, Congressman Robert Walker apparently put a hold on the bill temporarily. Do you recall that?

Congressman Robert Walker and Parliamentary Strategy as Related to the House

Condit: He might have done so, but I don't remember that specifically, but then his job was the Deputy [Republican] Whip. He was—still is—Mr. Parliamentary Tactics, and nobody had, in my mind, on our side of the aisle, had more agility with the rules than Bob did. I think it was his job to do that for everything, and then they allow it as you get the go-aheads from the members whose interests are at stake. You let them through that way. But, you know, those things can all crater in

the last minutes, too, as things are bundled together, and if not allowed to stand alone, they're hung with something that other people won't accept, this, that, and the other thing. So it was tenuous right up to the end that it would indeed pass.

Seney: And you think kind of fortuitous that it all kind of came together and worked out?

Condit: Well, not really, because Senator Reid did a lot of heavy lifting on the Senate side to make sure that other people didn't have holds on it, and I'm assuming—Wayne Mehl might know, but I'm assuming that Senator Reid then gave way on other people's bills. It's a parliamentary

procedure or tactic or whatever, advantage, that House members seldom ever get until it's the end of the session, particularly the end of a Congress, in the wee hours and everything, if it's going to pass at all, has to pass on unanimous consent, and unanimous consent means just that.

“ . . . Mrs. Vucanovich did have it within her power to stop it. She had people that were leaning on her not to do so . . . my advice and counsel to her at the end, that the good certainly outweighed the bad, and just getting the adjudication of the water rights for both Lake Tahoe, the Truckee, and the Carson, bi-state . . . was worth a whole, whole lot. . . . ”

So Mrs. Vucanovich did have it within her power to stop it. She had people that were leaning on her not to do so, particularly Senator Reid and Congressman Miller. Also Senator

[Bill] Bradley of New Jersey, he was Tom Jensen's boss. That sort of thing. Anyway, that was my advice and counsel to her at the end, that the good certainly outweighed the bad, and just getting the adjudication of the water rights for both Lake Tahoe, the Truckee, and the Carson, bi-state now, that compact ratified⁵ by Congress was worth a whole, whole lot.

“We had Nevada interests, like Pete Morros, who had differences with Barbara on other things . . . But when it came to . . . the Carson and the Truckee and the Lake Tahoe waters, my read was that the state of Nevada officials were extremely pleased by what those negotiations had led to. . . .”

5. The substance of the Interstate Compact that was defeated in 1986 was incorporated into Public Law 101-618 at sec. 204. Section 204 apportions the waters of the Carson River, Lake Tahoe, and the Truckee River between the State of California and the State of Nevada.

We had Nevada interests, like Pete Morros, who had differences with Barbara on other things, for sure. I knew that. On Federal reserved water rights, wilderness areas, that sort of thing. But when it came to this divvying up the Carson and the Truckee and the Lake Tahoe waters, my read was that the state of Nevada officials were extremely pleased by what those negotiations had led to.

Seney: Talk about the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District in all this, because I know they have considered Congresswoman Vucanovich a friend of theirs, and I know she feels the same way toward them. Tell us a little bit—or a lot, actually, all you can

remember about the relationship between the congresswoman's office and T-C-I-D during all this period.

The Truckee-Carson Irrigation District

“ . . . they viewed her as their voice in the Congress, because, first of all, she does represent that area and always has since that second district in Nevada was created in 1982, and they were the leading people that thought that Senator Reid's view of the way things should be dealt with wasn't quite right. . . . ”

Condit: Well, quite frankly, Don, they viewed her as their voice in the Congress, because, first of all, she does represent that area and always has since that second district in Nevada was created in 1982, and they were the leading people that thought that Senator Reid's view of the way things should be

dealt with wasn't quite right. (chuckles) And so it was natural for them, the Churchill County interests, including T-C-I-D, to go to Barbara that way.

I didn't work for her in the mid-eighties when those other attempts that I'm sure she supported Senator Laxalt's bills, and then when they went down—I don't know what to say. I mean, I was giving her advice and counsel, but on the other hand, she had background that I didn't have and couldn't hope to have, so I believe she would have reached these conclusions on her own, of course.

**The House Hearing Gave TCID Irrigators the
Opportunity to Present Their Views to the**

**Bureau of Reclamation History Program
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Congress

We introduced the other companion bill, and I don't even remember the number of it now. Like I say, we had one hearing on it. It provided a forum for Carl Dodge, and, well, the folks that are still very prominent members of the Irrigation District or the spinoffs now.

Seney: Ted deBraga and Lyman McConnell.

Condit: Yes, and those folks to come into town and tell their story to the Congress.

“They testified on the Senate side, as well, but, quite frankly, they thought they didn't get the reception that they perhaps should have from Senator Bradley chairing that subcommittee, and he was one of those Easterners, and what do they know about water rights in the West? This, that, and the other thing. . . .”

They testified on the Senate side, as well, but, quite frankly, they thought they didn't get the reception that they perhaps should have from Senator Bradley chairing that subcommittee, and he was one of those Easterners, and what do they know about water rights in the West? This, that, and the other thing. (laughter)

Seney: When you advised the congresswoman on these issues, what did you have in mind? How did you see them, and what were you trying to get her to see? What did you think was important to her? How do you proceed with something like that?

Condit: Don, I wish I'd had time to rehearse this or even think about remembering it.

Seney: I'll say this for the tape, I know I've caught you in the midst of a great deal of very pressing business, and I really appreciate your cutting some time out of the middle of a busy day. So I know if I had given you a chance to even think about it or go over any notes, you could remember more. But do the best you can for us, and as you speak, I think your memories will come back.

Sierra Pacific Power and the Tribes

"I do recall being enamored of the . . . portion of the settlement . . . the part that the Sierra Pacific Power Company had worked out with the Pyramid Lake Tribe. . . ."

Condit: Yes. I do recall being enamored of the settlement, the portion of the settlement—I'm trying to remember the code name for it. But it was the

part that the Sierra Pacific [Power Company] had worked out with [the Pyramid Lake Tribe].

Seney: Preliminary Settlement Agreement.

Condit: Right. With both the Pyramid Lake Tribe and BuRec [Bureau of Reclamation] about the way water could be stored at [Stampede Reservoir].

Seney: You thought that was a good agreement?

Condit: Yes. What's the name of that dam up there?

Seney: Stampede Reservoir.

Endangered Species, Indian Trust Responsibilities, and Stampede Reservoir

Condit: Stampede Reservoir. Right. And, of course, that caused me to go back and get the history of how the court had ruled that basically the Secretary of the Interior was to manage that reservoir with

respect to his obligation for endangered species as the primary thing, and, I don't know, perhaps something about his trust responsibilities to the Indians.

But I always viewed this thing as the trust responsibility to the Indians as to be divided, because there is the Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe, and they're just as Native American as Joe's [Ely] band at Pyramid Lake was. Number one, Joe Ely was—and I'm sure he remains—a very persuasive speaker and such. Number two, the power company's interests and the way that storage credits and all that stuff was, I thought, fairly cleverly crafted to provide drought storage

protection and still meet the mandates of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and all that sort of stuff, seemed like a practical solution for right there. While the folks downstream might have been clamoring for, “Well, it’s the damn fish that’s causing this issue,” so to speak, “let’s delist that fish,” and believe you me, I heard plenty of stories about how the Lahontan cutthroat trout was the predator fish to the cui-ui, at least the cui-ui spawn or something. (laughter)

What am I saying here? There were plenty of skeptics on the Newlands Project that the Pyramid Lake Tribe had an interest in seeing the population of either the cutthroat trout or the

cui-ui recovered under those plans and that sort of thing, but I thought that it provided the best solutions for anything short term, and at that time there didn't seem to be any sort of consideration that Endangered Species Act reform or reauthorization would significantly change the mandates on the secretary was anytime around the corner. That's different now, of course, but on the other hand, the ESA bill that Chairman [Don] Young [of the House Resources Committee] is pushing now is a long way from becoming law, too, and I haven't looked at it to see how the fact situation, if applied to that river system and lake and such, what it would change. Bottom line is,

we couldn't have foreseen that, so this was something—when you factored that in with the way the business community in Truckee Meadows thought and the mandates that T-C-I-D had to live with vis-a-vis the way the reservoir downstream on the Carson—

Seney: Lahontan.

Condit: Lahontan had to be managed under the OCAP [Operating Criteria and Procedures]. This is coming back, Don.

Seney: See, I told you it would come rushing back like in a dream. (Laughter)

The Politics of Making Decisions

Condit: Short of repealing ESA and somehow undoing the

OCAP or going back to previous OCAPs that were less restrictive on them or something like that, none of which seemed feasible, this was something that was worthy of Barbara's support and were she to somehow abandon it, more would be lost than could ever be gained. And I don't mean just in the votes. There are some cynics, I'm sure, that said, "Well, how many people live in Churchill County? A whole lot less than live in the Truckee Meadows alone."

Seney: You anticipated my next question, because that, to me, is a very legitimate concern for an elected official in our democracy, that is, to do what most of the voters want done. I mean, that's the way

the game is played, and it doesn't surprise me and it doesn't shock me. In fact, I think that's the way I want them to behave. That's the way most of their constituents want them to behave, and I have no problem with that. That must have come into your consideration, in your thinking, I would think, legitimately so.

Condit: Well, it might have if I had been a political animal, but I really glossed over my history. I never took one political science course in high school or college.

Seney: That may be to your benefit.

**Service in the Military and Study of Geology at the
University of Delaware**

**Bureau of Reclamation History Program
Newlands Project Series Oral history
William S. Condit**

Condit: I was a geologist. I'm a guy that graduated high school in 1966, enlisted in the military, went to Officer Candidate School because there was a war going on in Vietnam and they needed cannon fodder, blah, blah, blah, got out, Fort Ord, California, was my last duty station. Traveled across the country to get back to the University of Delaware, where I was going to go to school on the G.I. State, took two weeks to cross the country and said, "My God, I don't know anything about what I just saw. I'll take a geology course," and I was hooked for life.

“ . . . a person on the Newlands Project, not necessarily in T-C-I-D leadership, said to me, ‘Oh, it sounds like you’re a geologist.’ Upset, by the way. ‘It sounds like you’re a geologist, because

you don't know water law.' . . ."

But I went into this job as a geologist, and I'll have to tell you that one of the people in the T--C-I-D that was not happy--well, it was a person on the Newlands Project, not necessarily in T-C-I-D leadership, said to me, "Oh, it sounds like you're a geologist." Upset, by the way. "It sounds like you're a geologist, because you don't know water law." (laughter) And I don't think that I ever purported to Barbara that I did.

Dennis Underwood Put Bill Bettenberg onto the Project

But remember the Bush administration was in power then. The commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation obviously supported this

effort, as well. He's the one who put Bill Bettenberg on it back in those days, and Bill's still on it, and that was the gentleman from California. Dennis Underwood was the commissioner then.

“There were very few nay-sayers to the way the bill was being crafted, save for some people on the Newlands Project, whose real concerns, as I just said, ran so much deeper than that agreement. It was ESA . . . and/or Native American trust responsibilities . . .”

There were very few nay-sayers to the way the bill was being crafted, save for some people on the Newlands Project, whose real concerns, as I just said, ran so much deeper than that agreement. It was ESA—even OCAP was driven by ESA, so it's really Endangered Species

Act and/or Native American trust responsibilities that the secretary might have. I mean, I told the Anglos on the Newlands Project, “Your best friends on this issue are these Indians over here known as the—“ And they knew that; they didn’t need me to tell them that.

Seney: The Fallon Tribe.

Condit: Yeah.

Working in the House of Representatives

Seney: What exactly is your position now?

Works on the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources

Condit: I’m considered a professional staff member and nominal staff director of the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources. When I was

working for Barbara in that mode, she was actually the ranking Republican member on what was called Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee, but I was really there doing her mining stuff and I'm still doing mining stuff today.

Seney: But now you work directly for the subcommittee rather than for a particular member?

Even then I was with the minority . . . on the committee staff. I think Barbara kept me on what's called shared staff, so I was considered a partial employee of hers so I could go to Nevada on her travel office dollars when necessary.

Condit: Yeah. Even then I was with the minority of the committee, but on the committee staff. I think Barbara kept me on what's called shared staff, so

I was considered a partial employee of hers so I could go to Nevada on her travel office dollars when necessary.

Seney: So you worked for both, really, the subcommittee and for Congresswoman Vucanovich.

Condit: Right. And the issue never got to the George Miller Water and Power Subcommittee. His people were kept apprised of it. I'm sure you'll be speaking with Steve Lannick. Steve was the majority staff member for George Miller on the Subcommittee on Water and Power; in other words, Tom Jensen's opposite number, counterpart across the analog, as I like to say, across The Hill here. And he was monitoring it

for sure, so he could keep George Miller appraised of what was going on. But Tom Jensen lived and breathed this stuff and then decided that he'd better get to the Grand Canyon trust.

(laughter) Is that where he still lives, by the way?

Seney: No, he's at the Council on Environmental Quality.

Condit: Oh, he did? He's working for Katie then, right?

Katie McGinney.

Seney: I guess, yeah. I'm not sure who his boss is.

Condit: Damn, I'm going to have to look him up.

Seney: I have his number. I'll give it to you when we finish.

Condit: Anyway, Steve is somebody you should talk to.

Since it was the subject matter that he's

concentrated on, he would remember it more,
even though he didn't have the member interest.

**“ . . . remember . . . a large part of what we're
talking about was the codification of the divvying
up of the river . . . ”**

But remember, of course, a large part of what
we're talking about was the codification of the
divvying up of the river, and, yes, it's California
and the gentleman, Kennedy, from—was it Dave
Kennedy?

Seney: From State Water Resources Program.

Condit: Right. You know George Miller's people were
talking to him to make sure California was okay
with the deal.

Seney: Right. How much of this—and maybe you don't

really have a vantage point on this, but how much of Congresswoman Vucanovich's time was taken up in this period by this legislation and these periods of months from those February hearings in 1990 'til the bill passed later?

A Time Consuming Matter for Congresswoman Vucanovich

Condit: Too much, I'm sure she'll tell you. (laughter) It was quite a bit of time. I'm sure there were plenty of times she was out in the state on weekend recesses of the House and such that I wasn't with her, but I'm sure that there were several trips to Churchill County, interests in Fallon and T-C-I-D and all that sort of thing.

Vucanovich Requested a Town Meeting in Fallon

**to Explain Her Decision Regarding Public Law
101-618**

But I did go with her a few days after the ink was dry on the—well, actually, the president hadn't signed it yet, but after the Congress had adjourned and the election was just a week or so away, I was with her in Fallon to a town meeting that she actually asked be called, or like a town meeting, that was called just to talk about the rationale behind her decision to do this sort of thing. I thought she did a pretty good job of explaining herself to those people, and while there were some people there that were extremely upset, some of them at me, and believed that I had given her poor staff advice, and that's certainly

their prerogative to believe that.

Seney: More angry at you than her, in a sense?

“ . . . if you look at the election returns from November, 1990 in Churchill County, she certainly did no worse than she always does out there, which is actually quite well. If you look at Senator Reid’s returns out there, they’re not so good. . . .”

Condit: Yeah. Well, it was easy to be angry at me.

(laughter) I wasn’t a lifelong friend. I mean, she has friends out there that know her as being a longtime resident of Reno. So anyway, but she must have explained it adequately, because if you look at the election returns from November, 1990 in Churchill County, she certainly did no worse than she always does out there, which is actually quite well. If you look at Senator Reid’s returns

out there, they're not so good. (laughter)

Seney: They regard her still as a friend.

Condit: I hope so.

Seney: And yet if you look at what went on, as you say, even though her support for the bill may have been grudging, it was essential, necessary. I'm told that if she had wanted to, she could have scuttled it.

“That was the point of my story about unanimous consent [U.C.] necessary in the wee hours. It literally was 2 a.m. in the morning. . . . We were in what's called the Speaker's Lobby, just off the floor, and George Miller came out of the Democratic doors and Barbara came out of the Republican doors . . . George Miller threw this big bear hug around Barbara. I've never seen that before nor since. It's seldom that the two of them agreed on that. . . .”

Condit: That's what I meant. That was the point of my

story about unanimous consent necessary in the wee hours. It literally was 2 a.m. in the morning. We left the floor after that, and, as I say, it was the penultimate bill. There was only one action after that. We were in what's called the Speaker's Lobby, just off the floor, and George Miller came out of the Democratic doors and Barbara came out of the Republican doors, and a big bear hug.

[Tape recorder turned off.]

Seney: You have to go, and I really appreciate you sandwiching me in. I know your boss has just called, and off you go. Thanks a million.

Condit: Let me just say that story, and please ask Barbara about this, too. I hope she's not too embarrassed

by it. But after she agreed to the unanimous consent agreement that George Miller had asked for, i.e., both houses had then agreed on the exact same text, was headed to the president, the commissioner of Reclamation, the secretary of the interior Manuel Luhan was behind it, the bill was going to be signed into law. George Miller threw this big bear hug around Barbara. I've never seen that before nor since. It's seldom that the two of them agreed on that. I think Barbara was a little shocked by it.

“ . . . I'm sure she'll say that, all in all, it was still the thing to do, and she's hopeful that these continuing negotiations, if you will, can bring some measure of . . . equity, if you will, that the T-C-I-D, particularly the group that spun off to make the Newlands Water Protective Association, those

**kind of folks, you know, as I said to Barbara,
'What we really need to do is pray for rain out in
the Sierras, because, boy, those reservoirs need
to be refilled.' . . ."**

I mean, please, if you get an opportunity to interview her face to face, if you put the question to her, I'm sure she'll say that, all in all, it was still the thing to do, and she's hopeful that these continuing negotiations, if you will, can bring some measure of—what am I saying—equity, if you will, that the T-C-I-D, particularly the group that spun off to make the Newlands Water Protective Association, those kind of folks, you know, as I said to Barbara, “What we really need to do is pray for rain out in the Sierras, because, boy, those reservoirs need to be refilled.” I was out

there a year ago in October and drove by on U.S.
50, and there was a puddle—a puddle—in Lake
Lahontan there.

Seney: It's full this year.

Condit: Yeah? I guess so.

Seney: Well, thanks again, and on behalf of the Bureau,
we really appreciate it.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 1. NOVEMBER 9, 1995
END OF INTERVIEW.