

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

CRAIG F. WOODS



STATUS OF INTERVIEWS:
OPEN FOR RESEARCH



Interviews Conducted by:
Donald B. Seney,
California State University, Sacramento
For the Bureau of Reclamation's
Newlands Project Oral History Series



Interviews conducted–1998
Interview edited and published–2022

Oral History Program
Bureau of Reclamation
Denver, Colorado

SUGGESTED CITATION:

WOODS, CRAIG F. *Oral History Interview*. Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interviews conducted by Donald B. Seney, in 1998. Edited by Donald B. Seney, and desktop published by Andrew H. Gahan, Historian, Bureau of Reclamation. Repository for the record copy of the interview transcript is the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents..... i

Statement of Donation.....ii

Editorial Convention.....iv

Introduction..... v

Oral History Interview..... 1

 Tahoe-Truckee Sanitation Agency..... 1

 Porter-Cologne Act 2

 Plant Operations 4

 Truckee River Depletion Issues 6

 Well Drilling..... 8

 Water Allocation 9

 Sanitation Plant Expansion..... 10

 Regional Service Area 11

 Impact on the Truckee River 12

 Tertiary Plant 13

 TTSA Input into Public Law 101-618 15

 Five District Formation..... 17

 Connection Fees 18

 Plant Expansion..... 20

 TROA EIS 21

 Truckee River Operating Agreement..... 23

 California Interests 24

 Tahoe Regional Planning Authority 26

 TTSA Customers..... 27

 Political Contacts..... 31

Statement of Donation

STATEMENT OF DONATION OF ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW OF CRAIG F. WOODS

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, CRAIG F. WOODS (hereinafter referred to as "the Donor"), of TRUCKEE, CALIFORNIA 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 interviews conducted on and AUGUST 24, 1998 at TRUCKEE, CALIFORNIA 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.
2.
 - a. It is the intention of the Archivist to make Donated Materials available for display and research as soon as possible, and the Donor places no restrictions upon their use.
 - b. The Archivist may, subject only to restrictions placed upon him by law or regulation, provide for the preservation, arrangement, repair, and rehabilitation, duplication, and reproduction, description, exhibition, display, and servicing of the Donated Materials as may be needful and appropriate.
 - c. For Donated Materials with restrictions, the National Archives will provide access to the Bureau of Reclamation, if the Bureau of Reclamation presents written permission of the Donor specifying the types of information and proposed uses of said information.
3. Copies of the Donated Materials that do not have Donor restrictions on their use, may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the National Archives, including the Bureau of Reclamation. Copies of unrestricted Donated Materials may also may be provided to researchers. The Bureau of Reclamation may retain copies of tapes, transcripts, and other materials if there are no Donor restrictions on their use, and Reclamation may obtain copies of tapes, transcripts, and other materials at the time that Donor restrictions on the use of the materials ends.
4. The Archivist may dispose of Donated Materials at any time after title passes to the National Archives.

Date: 18 Sept 98

Signed: 
CRAIG F. WOODS

INTERVIEWER: DONALD B. SENEY

Having determined that the materials donated above by CRAIG F. WOODS 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: _____

Signed: _____
Archivist of the United States

Editorial Convention

A note on editorial conventions. In the text of these interviews, 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 struck-out material is readable.

The transcriber and editor 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.

While we attempt to conform to most standard academic rules of usage (see *The Chicago Manual of Style*), we do not conform to those standards in this interview for individual's titles which then would only be capitalized in the text when they are specifically used as a title connected to a name, e.g., "Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton" as opposed to "Gale Norton, the secretary of the interior;" or "Commissioner John Keys" as opposed to "the commissioner, who was John Keys at the time." The convention in the Federal government is to capitalize titles always. Likewise formal titles of acts and offices are capitalized but abbreviated usages are not, e.g., Division of Planning as opposed to "planning;" the Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992, as opposed to "the 1992 act."

The convention with acronyms is that if they are pronounced as a word then they are treated as if they are a word. If they are spelled out by the speaker then they have a hyphen between each letter. An example is the Agency for International Development's acronym: said as a word, it appears as AID but spelled out it appears as A-I-D; another example is the acronym for State Historic Preservation Officer: SHPO when said as a word, but S-H-P-O when spelled out.

Introduction

In 1988, The Bureau of Reclamation created 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 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;
- limited water resources in an urbanizing area;
- three Native American groups with sometimes conflicting interests;
- private entities with competitive and sometimes misunderstood water rights;
- many local governments with growing urban areas and 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.

Reclamation manages the limited water resources in a complex political climate while dealing with modern competition for some of the water supply that originally flowed to farms and ranches on its project.

Questions, comments, and suggestions may be addressed:

Andrew H. Gahan
Historian
Environmental Compliance Division (84-53000)
Policy and Programs
Bureau of Reclamation
P. O. Box 25007
Denver, Colorado 80225-0007

For additional information about Reclamation's History Program see:
www.usbr.gov/history

**Oral History Interview
Craig F. Woods**

Seney: My name is Donald Seney. I'm with Craig Woods, the general manager of the Tahoe-Truckee Sanitation Agency. Or, is it Truckee-Tahoe?

Woods: Tahoe-Truckee.

Seney: Tahoe-Truckee Sanitation Agency, in his office near Truckee California. Today is August 24, 1998. This is our first session and our first tape. You said before when we started talking that you've been general manager here for fifteen, sixteen years?

Woods: December of 1983 is when I took over as general manager.

Seney: Had you worked here before then?

Tahoe-Truckee Sanitation Agency

Woods: Yes, as operations superintendent and plant engineer. I started in August of 1977.

Seney: So, you weren't quite in at the inception but pretty close?

Woods: I was in, hired on as an inspector at the tail end of the plant construction. (Seney: Ah.) And then also assembled a staff to bring people on, train them prior to startup. So, I had about six months of experience here before we started up (Seney: Uh huh.) an operation.

Seney: So, you really did come in at the beginning then?

Woods: Beginning of operation. (Seney: Yeah.) Not the beginning of construction.

Seney: I see from the wall you're a graduate civil engineer from the, from Iowa State University?

Woods: Yes.

Seney: Is this the first job you had?

Woods: Actually no. I guess this is the second job. I started out in Los Angeles, worked for County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County. They had a stable of engineers, probably a 100-150 engineers on staff. And . . .

Seney: That's a large organization I'll bet?

Woods: Yes. (Seney: Yeah.) And, probably one of the premier organizations in the early '70s, on the West Coast, as far as environmental sanitary engineers, civil engineers. I worked there for five years and then moved up here.

Seney: Saw the circular for a position here?

Woods: Yes.

Seney: How did that work? Is that how it worked?

Woods: Yes.

Seney: You saw there was a – tired of Los Angeles?

Woods: Yes. Yeah.

Seney: Yeah.

Woods: Saw the ad and I wasn't sure (Seney: Right.) where [Lake]Tahoe was. (Laugh) I applied, and came up, and (Seney: Yeah.) fell in love with the area.

Porter-Cologne Act

Seney: Yeah. Were you aware of the Porter-Cologne Act¹ before its passage?

Woods: No.

Seney: The one that really made the district mandatory?

Woods: No, I – as we discussed, I'm a graduate of Iowa State University and I got my masters in '72, and I think the Porter-Cologne Act passed in what?

Seney: Seventy-two, I think.

Woods: Seventy-two?

Seney: Yeah.

Woods: And . . .

¹ The Porter-Cologne Act was enacted in 1969. "The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act is the law that governs water quality regulation in California. It was established to protect the beneficial uses of water and water quality—including surface water bodies, groundwater, and wetlands. As a result of this act, 9 regional boards and one state water board were created to better protect water rights and water quality in all of California. This act was recognized as one of the nation's strongest anti-pollution regulations—in fact it was so influential that Congressional authors used sections of Porter-Cologne as the basis of the Clean Water Act," Coachella Valley Waterkeeper, "Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act," (cvwaterkeeper.org) (Accessed 5/2022)

Seney: Somewhere in there.

Woods: I thought it was a little bit earlier than that.

Seney: Let me see. I think you have it in your publication. This was formed in May 1 of '72. But no, the Porter-Cologne Act is earlier, isn't it?

Woods: Was actually, I think, earlier in California.

Seney: Right. It was earlier. Right. Because it was part of the (Woods: In the late '60s.) California Water Project.

Woods: Right.

Seney: It was one of the elements of that. Right.

Woods: Right. That is the nucleus of California water law, (Seney: Right.) at least modern water law, I think. So, I was not aware of the Porter-Cologne Act until I arrived up here. And [I] really did not become extremely familiar with it until I became general manager. In operations I, my attentions were drawn elsewhere. It was, I was interested in operating a wastewater treatment plant, meeting waste discharge requirements, not necessarily studying the political arena, (Seney: Right.) or dealing with the politics of operating a treatment plant. (Seney: Right. Right.) It was more of the mechanics of operating it.

Seney: Even though this plant was constructed in the mid '70s this is still regarded as very much a modern state-of-the-art plant, isn't it?

Woods: This is still one of the more modern wastewater treatment plants in the world. I was just going through some literature today that talked about a sister plant back East, the Upper Occoquan Sewage Authority outside of Washington D.C., and that plant is much bigger, about ten times bigger than what we are, oh, seven to ten times bigger. But, the processes that they have are essentially the same processes that we have.

Seney: Just on a larger scale?

Woods: Yes.

Seney: Yeah.

Woods: And the, their effluent goes into a drinking water reservoir for, I guess, the communities in, I believe, it's Virginia.

Seney: They must have some dilution formula for that, do you know?

Woods: Yes. They do, but I'm not sure. It's, it's like – I'm not sure what it is.

Seney: One or two percent, maybe, of the . . .

Woods: No. I think it's a higher percentage than that. But . . .

Seney: So, they must put out pretty high quality?

Woods: Yes.

Seney: Yeah. And I know you do here too.

Plant Operations

Woods: Uhm-hmm.

Seney: What is it, less than, always less than three percent of the flow of the Truckee comes, is returned by you guys, is that right? Did I read that right?

Woods: Generally, that's correct. (Seney: Yeah.) During the dry water periods it'll increase (Seney: Right.) maybe to five to ten percent. But generally, one, two, three percent of the river flow would be considered effluent from our, our plant.

Seney: How high could the percentage get before there would be a water quality problem?

Woods: That would depend upon the time of the year. It depends upon the background water quality and such.

Seney: "Background water quality" meaning that, what the flow is at the moment in the river itself?

Woods: Yes. The upstream water quality.

Seney: Have you ever had a problem?

Woods: Not generally. (Seney: Yeah.) During the drought periods the river system water quality (Seney: Right.) was stressed.

Seney: Right. Oh yeah.

Woods: And . . .

Seney: Like brackish pools here and there in some places?

Woods: Well, I don't think brackish pools. And fact is you probably couldn't tell the difference between the water during the drought versus the water during a higher (Seney: Yeah.) flow period, except maybe for temperature, because it, the flows were slower and the water had a chance to warm up either in the reservoirs or in the stream.

Water quality, at all times, has been superb. It's always met the drinking water standards, and it's met the water quality objectives for the State of California.

Seney: So, what finally gets in out of the leach fields into the river, Martis Creek, Truckee River, is pretty clean stuff?

Woods: Yes.

Seney: Yeah.

Woods: We're doing some testing on that. The, well essentially what we have here is we have a wastewater treatment plant with a drinking water plant attached to the end. And so, we take that water and discharge it into a subsurface leech field, and then it flows down into a shallow aquifer. The shallow aquifer then transmits the water to the Truckee River and Martis Creek. We have additional treatment in the soils. And that's a known phenomenon that is accepted most anyplace in the world, that if you put a lower-quality water through an aquifer or through soils the soils will polish the effluent. And that's what we've been doing here for twenty years now. We're doing a, currently we have a study going on how to optimize nitrogen removal in the soils and that will continue for at least another four or five months.

Seney: The purpose of that being?

Woods: If we can shift any treatment scheme from, let's say, man-made processes or a contained process and turn it over and let nature do it, generally nature will do a better job, more cost effective, and it probably, it won't have the negative impacts of either more salts, T-D-S [Total Dissolved Solids], chlorides.

Seney: Total Dissolved Solids?

Woods: Yes.

Seney: T-D-S?

Woods: Yes.

Seney: I take it then you're sort of taking water, materials out of the plant before it flows through the last treatment and putting that into the ground and seeing how the ground will take that? Is that, do I understand it?

Woods: Actually, what we've done is we've backed off a little bit on the amount of nitrogen that we remove in the plant. (Seney: Oh.) Normally we can discharge nine milligrams per liter. We have raised that limit up to twelve milligrams per liter for a short period of time. (Seney: Ah.) It's been six, seven months now. And the removals in the soils have been extremely good. Last month they averaged ninety-three percent.

Seney: So, you're pleased with the preliminary results that you're getting from it?

Woods: Extremely pleased. Yes.

Truckee River Depletion Issues

Seney: Yeah. Yeah. Well, that, you know, I know one of the questions, and we can get to this now or later, that's being discussed now in context of the TROA [Truckee River Operating Agreement]² has to do with you, because it has to do with depletion. (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) And how much water will actually get back into the Truckee River that's used here in the upper Truckee [River] basin. Does this have any implications, what you're talking about for this issue of depletion?

Woods: Depletion is an issue that, at least it's come to the forefront in the last, oh, probably six months to a year by the Nevada interest, Sierra Pacific water.

Seney: And the tribe, probably, Pyramid Lake?

Woods: Yes. They've been, they've brought this depletion concept back. Although it's been part of the negotiations, it has not been in the forefront until the last six or eight months. This treatment plant, if you go back and look at the public law that was passed by Congress, it, we negotiated with all of the parties, made a trip or two back to Washington to listen to the congressional hearings on that public law, and we were successful in adding some language that allowed this treatment plant to discharge its water into this aquifer with, without any repercussions. So, depletion, I think that that's accepted here at the plant. I don't believe that they will apply a depletion number on us. It's already (Seney: Ah.) in the federal law and it allows this treatment plant to dispose, to treat and dispose of wastewater in the, well, it's somewhat of a limited, upwards of a thousand-acre area here. That supposedly protected the interests of the downstream water users, and I think it maybe it minimized, or if it didn't minimize it at least it made the amount of water that we would lose, or the depletion known. It's somewhat of a fixed amount.

Seney: So, you're okay as far as this depletion question is concerned?

² "More than 27 years in the making, the Truckee River Operating Agreement (TROA) now guides use of the river that winds nearly 120 miles from the mountains of Lake Tahoe to Pyramid Lake and is the primary water source for Reno and Sparks. The long-pursued plan brings the Truckee River's management into modern times, protects the area from protracted droughts and offers a promising future for the region....

"The agreement brings an end to historic uncertainty between Nevada and California over distribution of the river's water, allocating 90 percent to Nevada. Beyond enhanced drought storage for the Truckee Meadows community, it modifies the operation of federal and selected non-federal reservoirs in the river system to protect and improve water quality and enhances conditions for the endangered Pyramid Lake cui-ui and the threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout. By retaining more water in upstream reservoirs, TROA also expands the range of recreational opportunities, including boating and fishing." See, Truckee Meadows Water Authority, "Truckee River Operating Agreement," http://tmwa.com/water_system_settlement/ (Accessed 2/2019)

-
- Woods: Well, (Seney: You think?) we are on the micro scale. On the California-wide, I suspect that our losses will be accounted against California's allocation.
- Seney: Against the 32,000 total acre feet?
- Woods: Yes. I think so.
- Seney: I'm told it's hard to measure how much is not getting back in, how much is depleted, in other words, from your treatment. Do you have any idea when a gallon of water flows in, how much is going to get back to the Truckee River?
- Woods: Uhm . . .
- Seney: A gallon of waste?
- Woods: I know that some engineers have run some numbers on that, and I think that it would be upwards of ninety-five percent of the water that comes into this plant would leave and be released to the Truckee River and Martis Creek. It should be at least, (Seney: Yeah.) right around ninety-five percent. We have some evaporation losses from the clarifiers here, and when we use a spray irrigation system, we'll have some evaporation losses there, but I think on an annual basis those losses would be less than five percent.
- Seney: Does the 32,000 acre-foot allocation agreed to by the downstream interests assume that there's going to be a hundred percent return, or do they take the five percent losses? Because their argument is if, and I think what only 2,600 acre feet is now being used in this area, (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) something in that neighborhood, give or take. And I can't imagine what it would be like when you were using 32,000 acre feet. This would look like Los Angeles, probably? I mean, the development would be significant, wouldn't it?
- Woods: Well that's, yeah that's true, that we're using, I thought it was higher than 2,600 acre feet.
- Seney: I may be wrong about that, probably.
- Woods: But it's below, it's below 5,000 I believe. And the way the negotiations are going it sounds like they're going to take the 32,000 acre feet and then cut it in about half, and allow half of that to be depleted. I think that there was a number of something like 17,000.
- Seney: Nine hundred, I think, somewhere, 600, nine, yeah.
- Woods: Yeah. Acre feet (Seney: Right.) of water that can be depleted, which means about a fifty percent return. And I suspect it'll be decades before California interests run into, into that problem (Seney: To that barrier?) here in Martis Valley.

Seney: Yeah. Yeah. You know, one of the things that they also have dealt with in here in detail, and there's always something behind it – and what I'm gesturing to is the TROA [Truckee River Operating Agreement] (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) draft agreement, which I've been reading, and with great pleasure of course, it's a fascinating document, is the well drilling business. Are you familiar with the controversies over where wells are to be drilled, and how, and what all the concerns are with that? Well, what's your perspective on that?

Well Drilling

Woods: Well, there's a section in there that addresses T-T-S-A's [Tahoe-Truckee Sanitation Authority] discharge area. (Seney: Right.) And the main thing that T-T-S-A was interested in was protecting our ability to treat wastewater. And there's a possibility that if in order to optimize the subsurface treatment, or nutrient removal abilities of the soil, maybe we end up pumping some water from one location to another location here on the, oh about seven, 800 acres that we own here. And I wanted to protect that right, or the directors wanted to protect that, that ability. The other thing is there's a possibility that we would need additional wells for either landscape irrigation or drinking water here at the plant. But the main thing is the treatment of wastewater. So, we're aware of the well issue.

Seney: I guess I'm thinking more of the, how the wells have to be drilled and under what standards. And I'm taking that so that they're not so close to the Truckee River that they may be taking water out of the Truckee River, and again the downstream interests are involved in that. You're, that's not a concern of yours? That would be the water purveyors that would be more concerned about that?

Woods: Yeah. The water purveyors are more interested in that. As far as drilling a well, to what depth, and how it's cased and sealed, and such (Seney: Right.) that's just, you know, whatever the criteria is we will follow it. I don't see that as an obstacle to T-T-S-A treating wastewater here.

Seney: I'm looking for that section. There was one thing I wanted to ask you about that you may not, may or may not be able to answer, but I don't understand what this means, and maybe you can help me on this. Where it says, this is dealing with California, "All water right permits issued after May 1, 1996, would be limited to a maximum diversion in any one month to twenty-five percent of the total amount of water permitted to be diverted each year."

Woods: I have read that, but I really, I shouldn't comment on it because I haven't studied it, (Seney: Okay.) and I don't believe, it will not impact T-T-S-A.

Seney: Okay. And you don't know what they're getting at here? Because, that obviously means, my hunch is that it has something to do with snowmaking, perhaps.

Water Allocation

Woods: Well, let's see, I think what it really means, "all water right permit after May 1, 1996, would be limited to a maximum diversion of twenty-five percent of the annual amount." So, what they're saying is, they don't want you to take all of your yearly allocation in a short period (Seney: Right.) of time. (Seney: Right.) So, at best you could take a hundred percent of your annual allocation over a four-month period.

Seney: Yeah. Right.

Woods: Yeah. And, I don't . . .

Seney: You don't . . .

Woods: I don't think that relates to snowmaking at all.

Seney: Don't you?

Woods: No.

Seney: Okay.

Woods: No.

Seney: I've been trying to figure out what that meant, and (Woods: Yeah.) because all of these things means something.

Woods: Yeah.

Seney: I mean there's . . .

Woods: My understanding is that's just diversion of water, that they do not want all of that surface diversion, which is 10,000 acre feet, to be removed from the river system in one month.

Seney: Ah.

Woods: What they're saying is, at best they would lose from the river system 2,500 acre feet.

Seney: Right.

Woods: In a one-month period.

Seney: Right. Okay. That makes sense. You know, one of the questions about this depletion business is, that was at least put to me by, or points Joanne Roubique made about it was this maybe has to do with future treatment, rather than what you guys are

doing at the moment. Is that right? Is it, if another plant were to be built – or do you foresee another plant? Are you likely to be *the* plant and only expansions made? Are you in a drainage position? Are you low enough to get everybody’s sewage here, pretty much?

Sanitation Plant Expansion

Woods: Well, for all the planned development in the Truckee area, Lake Tahoe, and Alpine, and Squaw Valley, North Star, Martis Valley, this is the treatment plant of choice. It’s the only, only one around. And I do not see anyone building a similar treatment plant here. I know that Glenshire-Devonshire³ ten years ago attempted to come up with a scheme to where they were going to have their own treatment plant, and we argued against that because of our concerns about, we have one of the most sophisticated treatment plants in the world here and they were going to have a very primitive treatment plant that was not what we would consider, it did not have the backups or the reliability that this treatment plant had. And so, it, what we did is we lobbied and convinced the designers, the, I guess it was the County of Nevada, to divert, or send the waste from Glenshire-Devonshire to this treatment plant. I do not, in answer to your question, I do not expect another treatment plant to be built here in the next twenty or thirty years. I think this treatment plant, we’re considering undergoing an expansion at this time that will bring the capacity up to right around ten million gallons a day. That’ll increase our existing flows by fifty to sixty percent. That should carry us for at least the next fifteen years, and maybe thirty years.

Seney: Yeah. And so, and you expect the bulk of the population to be in an area that drains? Do you have to pump any of the sewage or does it all drain to you?

Woods: Almost all of the wastewater comes to T-T-S-A through gravity lines. Some of the member districts, of which there’s five, they do pump.

Seney: They have to pump up over the hill to get it to . . .

Woods: Actually, it’s along the lake. North Tahoe pumps along the lake to get the flows to Tahoe City. Tahoe City P-U-D [Public Utility District] pumps along the lake to get the wastewater to the, their terminus point, which is Tahoe City where the Truckee River, I guess it’s the head, not the headwaters but where it bleeds off of Lake Tahoe. Let’s see, Truckee, they have some pump stations around Donner Lake, and I believe a couple up in Tahoe Donner. So, there’s pumping of wastewater by the individual member entities. (Seney: Yeah.) But there’s no pumping of wastewater in the collection system by T-T-S-A.

Seney: On your Board of Directors, who makes up that Board? Are the P-U-Ds represented on the Board?

³ Glenshire-Devonshire is a residence association in Truckee, California.

Regional Service Area

Woods: Yes. T-T-S-A was formed in 1972 by a special act of the state legislature. It was formed as a regional wastewater treatment plant to collect the wastewater from five member entities, treat that wastewater at a centralized place with a very advanced – and fact is, it was the most sophisticated wastewater treatment plant in the world when we opened our doors, and it’s still very close to that. So, it’s a regional plant and it displaced or replaced upwards of about six or seven small little wastewater treatment plants. North Tahoe Public Utility District and Tahoe City Public Utility District, they had primary treatment at Tahoe City and then they pumped the primary effluent up into what they called the “cinder cone.” The cinder cone was just a very granular part of a volcano, and the wastewater went in this volcano, extinct volcano, flowed down, and then came out another vent hole, and then entered the Truckee River.

Seney: Was it in very good shape by the time it returned?

Woods: Well it was, biologically it was in pretty good shape but it still had nutrients. The nutrients were phosphorus and nitrogen. (Seney: Oh.) And they could trace the, where the effluent was going by the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus in the river. So, that was one treatment plant that was replaced by us.

Seney: Go ahead.

Woods: The second one would have been Alpine Meadows. Alpine Meadows had an activated sludge plant, and operated quite well, and served, obviously, Alpine Meadows ski area and then the, that small community in Alpine Meadows. Squaw Valley had at least two, I believe two, maybe three, wastewater treatment plants there. They had the old Olympic plant, which was from the 1960 Olympics. They had another treatment plant that was called, I believe, the “Papoose Treatment Plant,” and then there was, I believe, a third one, which was out towards the, I’ll say the entrance of Squaw Valley. And then, as we move downstream Truckee Sanitary District had seven ponds, facultative, or oxidation ponds. Aeration in the first pond and then the flows moved successively down the ponds into the last pond, where most of the time, I believe, the wastewater evaporated or percolated into the soils. During periods of high flows they pumped the wastewater into some ponds that they called the “D ponds.”, and that was a rapid infiltration system.

Seney: How does that work in real cold weather?

Woods: As long as there is water in the ponds and the water’s moving, generally (Seney: Okay.) you do not end up with a lot of ice on top of the ponds. So it, it works reasonably well for (Seney: Yeah.) a number of years. I believe Truckee Sanitary District is the oldest sanitary district in the state of California, with a starting date of, I believe, somewhere around 1906. So that, let’s see, and then North Star, they had constructed a treatment plant up at North Star and to my knowledge it never treated

any wastewater. By the time North Star started to develop, the concern about water quality was such that North Star was essentially forced to discharge their wastewater, or transmit their wastewater down to Truckee Sanitary District, and then (Seney: Oh.) T-S-D handled it for a number of years, and then we took over in February of 1978. So, that's a long answer for a short question.

Seney: No, that's a good answer. Yeah. No. No. That's, and that's not an unusual situation around the country where one modern plant takes over from a (Woods: Yeah.) bunch of antiquated plants. What difference did that make in the quality of the Truckee River water?

Woods: I think the biggest, biggest improvement was night . . .

Seney: Let me turn this over.

Woods: Yeah.

END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1. AUGUST 24, 1998.

BEGINNING OF SIDE 2, TAPE 1. AUGUST 24, 1998.

Impact on the Truckee River

Woods: Okay. The biggest improvements that we've seen is T-T-S-A has removed nitrogen and phosphorous from the wastewater flow stream. Probably the negatives have been that you've collected all of the wastewater from these – I'm tongue tied – dispersed . . .

Seney: Diverse?

Woods: Diverse. Thank you. Diverse – actually it's not diverse. It would be . . .

Seney: Multiple?

Woods: Well, anyway, spread out. (Seney: Yeah.) From this wide-spread out area, (Seney: Right.) and so when you have numerous wastewater treatment plants then the impacts on the environment are spread throughout a system. Now that we have a centralized wastewater treatment plant all of the impacts, positive or negative, are hit, are focused at one point. One of the negative impacts would be the increased chlorides, the increased salts that we discharge from this plant because we use an ion exchange system to remove nitrogen. Nitrogen is removed in the form of ammonia through an ion exchange media, and then that ion exchange media is regenerated with solar grade sea salt. The solar grade sea salt adds sodium and chlorides to the, to the system. So, I guess then the big pluses are nitrogen removal, phosphorous removal, dependability (Seney: Yeah.) factor increased tremendously when T-T-S-A went online. There's not been a failure of this treatment plant, whereas I know that some of the treatment plants came very close to failures early on.

Seney: Right. Right. So, you've never had a problem with not being able to process whatever has flowed into here?

Woods: We've had some, some very stressful periods during the high flows, February of '86, and then also the New Year's storm, Christmas-New Year's storm of '96-'97. (Seney: Right. Right.) Very stressful periods, but no direct discharges of untreated wastewater to, to the Truckee River.

Seney: Yeah. This is called a "tertiary plant" isn't it?

Tertiary Plant

Woods: Yes.

Seney: Meaning three steps?

Woods: And, actually, "tertiary" means that it is three steps, but the third step can have many sub-steps in it, and this treatment plant does. Do you want a, (Seney: Sure.) brief description.

Seney: Yeah. Really.

Woods: We have – well, I guess, let me give just history of T-T-S-A. I mentioned earlier that it was formed in 1972. The board of directors and general manager started to obtain funds, study funds, to site the plant, and then they designed a facility and located it here in Martis Valley. Construction, I believe, started in '74 or '75, and it was like a two and a half, three-year construction period. Let's see, the wastewater comes from the five member entities. There's a seventeen-mile interceptor sewer that runs from Tahoe City, along the Truckee River, through the community of Truckee, and out to the treatment plant. The sewer is actually in the old railroad right-of-way as, as the railroad would run from Tahoe City to the community of Truckee, and there was a number of places that we had to dig up old bridge abutments for the bridges that crossed the Truckee River. And you can still see evidence of those old bridge abutments and some of the modifications that we, that we did. There's seven, let's see, I believe there's eight river crossings that our pipeline takes as it flows down along the Truckee River.

As far as the treatment plant goes, we have one of the most advanced wastewater treatment plants in the world. It was the most advanced when we opened up, and even though twenty years has passed the technology still is, is extremely high. We have primary treatment. Primary treatment is a part of most every treatment plant. It's just a physical settling of the material. We have an activated sludge system, which is a biological system, and here we use a pure oxygen activated sludge. Then, the next step is chemical treatment. Chemical treatment is where we remove phosphorous from the flow stream. We actually, today, and for the last fifteen years we've concentrated the phosphorous in a side stream by using what is called a

“luxury uptake” or “biological removal system.” It’s also known by the commercial name of a “faux strip.” We have then ballast ponds that equal out the flows. The ballast ponds, then we, we pump the wastewater, and this is the first time and only time that we pump the wastewater flow. It goes from a gravity system into a pumped or a pressure system. The pressure system then consists of dual media filters. The next phase would be activated carbon for taste, color, and odor removal. The next phase would be ion exchange for the removal of nitrogen in the form of ammonia. And then the last phase would be chlorination with, then discharged to a subsurface leech field that consists of about 80,000 lineal feet of leech pipe in, oh spread over about twenty, twenty-five acres of land. And then the wastewater flows down into the aquifer and it takes thirty to sixty days to flow into the Truckee River. So, that’s the treatment process kind of in a nutshell.

Seney: I saw pictures of, you’re actually spraying at some, do you spray sometimes too?

Woods: That’s an option that we have experimented with for about eight or nine years now, and the spray irrigation system is just an alternative to our subsurface leech field. The spray irrigation system would only be used in the summer when the temperatures are at or above freezing. And actually, they have to be just a little bit above freezing to effectively use the spray irrigation system. It has worked well, but again it can only be used for generally the months of June, July, August, and September. So, you can only use it for a quarter to a third of the year.

Seney: But it, I suppose, does give you the option of being able to maintain the other if you have to, or work on it while you’re using the sprays?

Woods: Yes. It has, well we’ve only used about ten or fifteen percent of our flow (Seney: Ah.) in that pilot program. We are considering expanding the spray irrigation system in our plant expansion, or the next phase.

Seney: What’s the advantage of that over keeping up the subsurface piping?

Woods: Surface, spray surface irrigation allows the wastewater to contact the plants and the root system at the top or the very rich soils at the top of the soils. Your nitrogen and phosphorous removals are greater there. (Seney: Ah.) And, if you can, well most nutrient removal is through plants. And so, it’s, it approaches wetlands treatment, at least (Seney: Ah.) in the root zone.

Seney: So, it’s just more efficient then, if you can do part of it in that way?

Woods: Right. It’s more efficient, but you can only use it during just a portion of the year.

Seney: Yeah. Let me go back to ask you a little bit more about Public Law 101-618.⁴ You said you were successful in getting language in there to, to look after your own situation here. (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) At what point did you get involved in that? Were you involved in the negotiations that preceded 101-618?

TTSA Input into Public Law 101-618

Woods: Yes. Not as, not as intimately as a lot of the water users or water purveyors in Nevada. But yeah, we were very interested in the ability for T-T-S-A to continue to treat wastewater. And so, we entered into those negotiations. And it was just for wastewater treatment (Seney: Sure.) in California.

Seney: Well, you're looking after your interests, right? I mean (Woods: Right.) you want to make sure your plant's respected and you're not squeezed out somehow?

Woods: Right.

Seney: I mean, you're gonna – you know, when you said earlier that you began to be operations director you weren't interested then or obliged to take care of the political side of (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) treating it? Now you are, after '82, (Woods: Yes.) as the general manager? And this is one of the things that would (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) fall under that heading, wouldn't it?

Woods: Right.

Seney: How did you find out about these negotiations? Do you remember? I know it's a long time ago. But . . .

Woods: Well, it was, one the newspaper shared information, and then two, various water interests groups around kept us informed. I guess I could say that the lake districts, North Tahoe P-U-D and Tahoe City P-U-D, their general managers, Dave

⁴ Public Law 101-618 became law on November 16, 1990. The Law contains two acts: The Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribal Settlement Act and the Truckee-Carson-Pyramid Lake Water Rights Settlement Act. The main topics of the legislation are:

- Fallon-Paiute Tribal Settlement Act
- Interstate Allocation of water of the Truckee and Carson rivers.
- Negotiations of a new Truckee River Operating Agreement (TROA).
- Water rights purchase program is authorized for the Lahontan Valley wetlands, with the intent of sustaining an average of about 25,000 acres of wetlands.
- Recovery program is to be developed for the Pyramid Lake cui-ui and Lahontan cutthroat trout.
- The Newlands Project is re-authorized to serve additional purposes, including recreation, fish and wildlife, and municipal water supply for Churchill and Lyon counties. A project efficiency study is required.
- Contingencies are placed on the effective date of the legislation and various parties to the settlement are required to dismiss specified litigation.

Source: [http://www.usbr.gov/mp/lboa/public law 101-618.html](http://www.usbr.gov/mp/lboa/public%20law%20101-618.html) (Accessed December 2011).

Antonucci,⁵ whom you're going to (Seney: Right.) interview, John Hassenplug,⁶ I don't know if you . . .

Seney: I haven't made an appointment with him.

Woods: Okay.

Seney: Is he . . .

Woods: North Tahoe.

Seney: North Tahoe? And, he's probably worth seeing as well?

Woods: I would think so.

Seney: Yeah.

Woods: Those two individuals, and their agencies, aggressively negotiated water, water rights, in the late '80s and were instrumental in keeping, I guess, this agency, or T-T-S-A and myself, abreast of what was going on. We became involved in this, and we used the law firm of Kronick, Moscovitz, Tiedemann, [spelling?] & Girard, and Adolph Moscovitz [spelling?] helped us in . . .

Seney: That's a Sacramento firm, isn't it?

Woods: Yes.

Seney: Yeah.

Woods: Adolph helped us in developing our comments and helped us lobby to make sure that our comments were included in the Public Law.

Seney: And that's a firm that's been active otherwise. Mr. [Frederick W.] Girard,⁷ I think, has represented T-C-I-D [Truckee Carson Irrigation District] in (Woods: Yes.) in cases? So, they're (Woods: Yes.) a general water firm, I take it, that handles . . .

⁵ David C. Antonucci participated in Reclamation's Newlands Series oral history project. See, David C. Antonucci, *Oral History Interview*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interview conducted by Donald B. Seney, edited by Donald B. Seney and desktop published by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, 2009, <https://www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html>.

⁶ John C. Hassenplug participated in Reclamation's Newlands Series oral history project. See, John C. Hassenplug, *Oral History Interview*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interview conducted by Donald B. Seney, edited by Donald B. Seney and desktop published by Andrew H. Gahan, historian, Bureau of Reclamation, 2016, <https://www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html>.

⁷ Frederick W. Girard participated in Reclamation's Newlands Series oral history project. See, Frederick W. Girard, *Oral History Interview*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interview conducted by Donald B. Seney, in Sacramento, California, on July 20, 1999, edited by Donald B. Seney and desktop published by Andrew H. Gahan, historian, Bureau of Reclamation, 2014, <https://www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html>.

Woods: I think . . .

Seney: Among other things, water problems?

Woods: One of the premier water rights law firms in the state of California.

Seney: Right. I know. I'm going to try to speak to Mr. Girard and maybe I should speak to Mr. Moscovitz too.

Woods: He passed away two years ago.

Seney: Yeah. It's a little late then, for him. But (Woods: Yeah.) I could still get Mr. Girard, I think.

Woods: Yes. A very colorful person.

Seney: Is he? He looks that – you know, there was a page on him on the Internet, that the law firm had put on. And I've heard him, you know, other people have mentioned him as well as a very able attorney and a very interesting individual.

Woods: Yes. Extreme and colorful.

Seney: What do you mean when you say that?

Woods: Oh, he's, probably as more of the, well he's a very sophisticated attorney but he doesn't hold his tongue. When he thinks something is going the wrong way he'll speak up. He's very blunt, very straightforward. Adolph, who passed away a couple of years ago, is very, very smooth. He was, would listen, would respond in a very smooth and polite, non-offending way. Fred, he'll get in and call a spade a spade. (Seney: Yeah.) He just really gets in and mixes it up. (Seney: Yeah.) Partners in the same law firm. (Seney: Right.) Principals in the same law firm, but two different personalities.

Seney: Yeah. Yeah. You know, when you talked about Mr. Antonucci and then the other gentleman at North Tahoe P-U-D.

Woods: John Hassenplug?

Seney: Yeah. Do you guys have a kind of informal organization or informal organization? Do you, you know, because they've got to have, they've got political responsibilities too (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) just as you do. (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) And so, you guys look out for one another when your interests converge? How does that work?

Five District Formation

Woods: Well, it actually, we do have an informal method of communication. We, and fact is I communicate with both of those managers at least on a monthly basis. The way T-T-S-A was set up, a regional wastewater treatment plant, it was the merging of five districts. Not the merging. "Merging" is the incorrect term. But it was five districts that went together, formed T-T-S-A. It's similar to a joint powers. And each one of the member entities appoints a director to sit on T-T-S-A's Board. North, let's see, North Tahoe, Tahoe City, and Truckee Sanitary District each appoint one person with one full vote. Alpine Meadows and Squaw Valley appoint one person, but that person only has half a vote each. So, I have five members with four votes, which is an interesting structure.

Seney: What happens when there's a tie? If there . . .

Woods: Very seldom is there ties.

Seney: Oh, yeah.

Woods: And actually, I think T-T-S-A has been very fortunate that we've been focused on wastewater issues and very seldom do we have a lot of dissension on the board. (Seney: Yeah.) If, wastewater, the decisions that are made on wastewater are pretty straightforward.

Seney: Yeah. Well, you know, I told you I did my doctoral dissertation, in part, on sewer districts (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) and sewer politics, and it says to me, when you've had this long tenure here as the general manager, that things run pretty smoothly. (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) And I expect that – I don't mean to put this in the wrong way – not that you know how to handle the board, but you know how to get along with them and how to keep them informed, and how to make sure that you've got a consensus (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) on matters that you need a consensus on?

Woods: Well, again, I'll go back to wastewater issues are generally pretty (Seney: Right.) straightforward, (Seney: Right.) and generally not too political. The operation of the wastewater treatment plant is, I guess, my specialty. And the political decisions I generally leave up to the board of directors to give me direction (Seney: Right.) and to guide the agency (Seney: Right.) on.

Seney: Well, one of the things I noticed from, from reading your material is that you haven't had to raise your connection fees. I've noticed some new houses being built up here. They're going to have a lovely view of your facility, as well as other views, and those look like nice, at least four-bathroom homes to me. (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) What's that going to cost them to connect those four bathrooms to your system?

Connection Fees

Woods: Well, the units across the river, if that's the ones you're (Seney: Yeah.) making reference to, they will be on their own septic tanks. (Seney: Ah.) There is not a

-
- public sewer system across the river (Seney: Okay.) that pulls the wastewater this way. There's a few areas that are on septic tanks. (Seney: Okay.) And those homes will meet the minimum criteria of so many acres per dwelling unit. But, if a new home is constructed and it hooks up to the sewer, then there is, obviously a connection fee (Seney: Right.) due this agency, and the connection fee, right now, is \$2,000 per single family dwelling.
- Seney: How many bathrooms can I have for \$2,000?
- Woods: Well, you can have a house. And, if you want six bathrooms in your house or you want one bathroom in your house, it's going to cost you \$2,000, as long as it's a single-family dwelling. (Seney: Uh huh.) If you have an apartment in the house, then we consider that two dwellings.
- Seney: So, \$4,000 for that?
- Woods: So, that would be \$4,000 if there's one apartment. If there's two apartments plus the single-family dwelling, or the main (Seney: Right.) dwelling, then that would be three dwellings.
- Seney: Right. Right. That doesn't seem to me to be very high. Is it?
- Woods: It's actually very, very reasonable. (Seney: Right.) It's on the low, low spectrum. Years ago, in 1982 and '83 we had a connection fee of \$4,000. It remained at \$4,000 up until about 1990 or '91, and then it reduced down to, it stepped down to \$2,000.
- Seney: What did you do, retire some debt at that point so you could get it down?
- Woods: We retired some debt and we started to build up reserves to the point that the directors felt that it was best to return that money to the, to the public. (Seney: Yeah.) We actually went through a rebate program, where we rebated money to people that had paid more than \$3,000. If a person paid \$4,000, then we gave them \$1,000 back. If they paid \$3,500, then we gave them \$500 back.
- Seney: Well, nothing is going to keep you out of political hot water as much as something like that and keeping your fees low?
- Woods: Yeah.
- Seney: I mean, that's got to be, I would think for you and the directors, that's got to be a big, I don't want to say "priority," to make sure that you don't run into the kinds of problems that districts like this run into when they have to charge a good deal more all of a sudden, or the fees keep going up, and up, and up, rather than down. I would think that's a big political plus. You must get invited to all the parties in town, I would think?
-

Woods: Surprisingly, when we reduced our rates, there was not a lot of positive comment. We received an article or two that was favorable in the local press, in the local newspapers, and maybe a couple two, three, four “thank yous” from the rate payers, but generally that was it. People, I guess, accept wastewater and they’ll pay what they feel (Seney: Right.) is the price requested then, and I (Seney: Yeah.) think that California has done a good job in, in checking excessive fees. So, we’ll probably go back up during this plant expansion.

Plant Expansion

Seney: That’s what I was going to say, you mentioned the plant expansion, and how much did you say you were going to spend, \$10 million on that?

Woods: Oh . . .

Seney: Or, did you say?

Woods: No. I haven’t said. But it could be \$20-\$30 million, and it could be even greater than \$30 million.

Seney: Now, will you get any of that money from the state or the federal government, or are you going to have to raise that all yourself, do you think?

Woods: We’ll have to raise all of that money ourselves. The state has some, some state revolving loans, and they’re available, but there’s a lot of red tape that goes with, with those types of loans. The other thing would be to go out and generate those funds through some type of revenue, whether it would be a certificate of participation or a revenue bond, Mello-Rouse Bonds are also available. It’s, we’re just getting into the process now and it’ll be (Seney: Yeah.) six months (Seney: Yeah.) or a year before we’ve really decided on how we’re going to finance the facility.

Seney: Well, you have a considerable amount of flexibility as a revenue producing entity, don’t you?

Woods: Uhm . . .

Seney: If you were selling park bonds you’d be in a very different place, wouldn’t you?

Woods: Probably. (Seney: Yeah.) Except I know that, at least in California, it’s been more difficult to finance public works projects since Prop 13 and a number of the other (Seney: Yes. Yes.) propositions that have been passed.

Seney: Will you have to go to the voters for this, or can you do revenue bonds through the board?

Woods: There's some variations where you can raise funds without going to the voters, but I, I suspect that the directors will ask for a vote to get support.

Seney: Politically it's wiser (Woods: Sure.) to do that? Yeah. Yeah. Right. Let me ask you about the TROA E-I-S [Environmental Impact Statement]. Have you been involved at all (Woods: Yes.) TROA – what's, what have you been doing on that?

TROA EIS

Woods: Well, we obviously we commented as an agency on the draft E-I-R [Environmental Impact Report]/E-I-S. And our comments are part of the public record. We were generally disappointed in the lack of depth that the E-I-R/E-I-S went into. We felt that they should look at more options than just the, I guess the TROA option and the no-action alternative. We think that there's a number of . . .

Seney: This is the one you're referring to?

Woods: Well, this is not our comments. But . . .

Seney: No. No. I mean, that's the draft that you're referring to?

Woods: Yeah. This is the – well, the draft is yea thick.

Seney: Yeah.

Woods: Yeah.

Seney: Yeah. But this is a . . .

Woods: And so, this would be part of it.

Seney: The summary of it, right? Yeah.

Woods: Yeah.

Seney: Yeah. The summary of the points?

Woods: Yeah.

Seney: When you said, "yea thick" you made a gesture of a foot thick at least?

Woods: Oh, at least eight inches.

Seney: At least eight? Yeah. (Laugh)

Woods: Yeah. Five or six, I guess. (Seney: Yeah.) One main volume and at least four or five appendices.

Seney: So, you didn't think it went into enough depth?

Woods: I – yes. Our comments were that there was a number of alternatives that they, for some reason or another neglected to look at, and I'm not sure if they have the legal standing to not look at those or not. That'll be decided depending upon their responses to our questions and a lot of other questions (Seney: Yeah.) or comments. Yeah. So.

Seney: What impact does the recent Ninth Circuit Court have on that, where they ruled in favor of the Truckee Carson Irrigation District's request for a programmatic E-I-S over the whole of Public Law 101-618? Not these pieces of a piece here for the wetlands. You know, you're smiling here.

Woods: Uhm-hmm.

Seney: A piece for the wetlands and a piece for TROA. What do you think about that?

Woods: I, the only thing I know about that is what I read in one newspaper article in the *Reno* (Seney: Right.) *Gazette Journal*.

Seney: That's all I've seen. Right.

Woods: And I'm not sure, that was actually, I think, addressing the Preliminary Settlement Agreement, I believe.

Seney: Yeah. I can't recall. But it . . .

Woods: And so, that was not addressing the E-I-R/E-I-S. It's way too early to have lawsuits over the E-I-R/E-I-S TROA.

Seney: I guess it is, yeah.

Woods: So, I think that that's an interesting ruling, and it'll be interesting to see what happens if that does have an impact. I think that you're dealing with two, two different environmental laws here. You're dealing with federal and you're dealing with the state of California. And where maybe the federal law allows some . . .

Seney: Is that NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act]?

Woods: Yes. (Seney: Yeah.) Allows some variation. California probably doesn't. And I'm not an expert on those two. (Seney: Yeah.) But I think with the federal, the NEPA, and the CEQA [California Environmental Quality Act] process that there's a tremendous number of hoops that this process has to go through. And, and it's, it's

best that all of these things be made public, that they be discussed publicly, and that rationale be given for the decisions and recommendations that are made in TROA.

Truckee River Operating Agreement

Seney: Yeah. How do you see the TROA process overall? I mean, it was supposed to be finished some time ago, and now no one, I think maybe next year is that. How, have you attended the meetings? Are you on any of the subcommittees? What role have you played there?

Woods: Well, I've attended the meetings that have pertained to let's say California and to wastewater treatment, to the well issues, and there's meetings with the State of California. There's meetings with the local water purveyors, a Truckee group, and then there's also the large workshops that they would have with all of the negotiators involved. So, I've attended a number of those meetings, almost countless meetings. The issues are huge. The impacts are tremendous. You know, it's obvious that it's, the interests of the Nevada water users, very diverse, and yet very critical. You have most of the water falls in California, but almost all of the water is used in Nevada. (Seney: Right.) And so, you have the cooperation, or maybe not cooperation, between the two states. You have the federal agencies, and there can be conflicting viewpoints between the federal agencies, and then throw in the various Indian tribes, and it's quite a, quite a stew that's being stirred.

Seney: Does it look like it's going to come to final resolution. I know there are people on the Nevada side who are concerned that it might unravel. Do you have that concern?

Woods: I suspect that it will be approved, but it won't be approved for another couple, two, three, four years. I think it'll take that long . . .

END SIDE 2, TAPE 1. AUGUST 24, 1998.

BEGINNING OF SIDE 1, TAPE 2. AUGUST 24, 1998.

Seney: Donald Seney. I'm with Craig Woods, the general manager of the Tahoe-Truckee Sanitation Agency, in his office near Truckee, California. It's August 24, 1998. This is our first session and our second tape.

So, you think it's going to be a couple more years before this gets resolved.

Woods: I don't see how they can wrap everything up in rapid fashion. Everything, to date, has taken two, three, four times longer (Seney: Yeah.) than what they expected. And I don't see the, the end of this, you know, getting moved along (Seney: Yeah.) any faster. There's a tremendous amount of work that's gone into it. It'll probably be approved in, you know, close to the fashion that it's in. I think that there's some California interests that, hopefully, will be – well, I guess, will be successful in bending some of the ears such that we're successful in our concerns. Our concerns are mid-course correction. What happens if all of these things that are planned don't

work as well as we want them to do? The other thing is on, a couple of minutes ago we talked about whether you look at the system segmented in individual little agreements, or if you have to look at the whole thing. And I think it's the whole thing that will, will dictate what's going on. So.

Seney: How do you think the California representatives are representing California's interests?

California Interests

Woods: There was a wise gentleman who said that, "Lake Tahoe is a stage, a stage for the politicians of California and occasionally the federal politicians." Obviously, that's somewhat correct. Clinton and Gore were here a year ago, and then all of the people that are running for statewide offices, they always, seems like they show up here at Tahoe and make an environmental speech. I'll have to give credit to Tim Sullivan for saying that. And I think that California looks at the water issues up here as just a continuation of this stage. The population up here is small. The interests, I don't think, are as great. The money isn't here. It's not like a Southern California. It's not like a Bay Area. It's not like the San Joaquin Valley where tremendous amount of agriculture reigns. We're talking about recreation. And if the recreation interests can be preserved or protected then I think California will, will sign off on that. I don't think that California interests are aggressively fighting to protect the local interests. You have five parties signing the, the agreement. One of those interests is California. One of them is federal. The rest of them are Nevada interests. And that's just, I think that kind of points out that the interest or the power is downstream.

Seney: What are you doing to try to get the California delegation to see things more sympathetically to the Truckee Basin here?

Woods: I think the main thing that all of us local managers are doing is, is just monitoring the best we can. We have other jobs to do. California has a number of people putting forth effort to resolve this issue, but I think their primary thing is to resolve the issue, not necessarily to get certain concessions out of the program. And, I probably shouldn't be saying this.

Seney: Oh, you should. That's exactly what I want you to say. I mean, there's a lot of complaint from this end, (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) that California, one is that they, that they're more oriented, the Department of Water Resources, towards Central Valley Problems. (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) I mean, when you look at the volume of water and the extent of interest in the Central Valley and then you look up here it's, it's night and day. I mean, one is huge and overwhelming (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) and that's where most of these people in that department have spent their careers, is down in some aspect of the California Water Project, or working with the feds in the Central Valley, (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) and they're not very knowledgeable about this area. Would you say that was the case?

Woods: Oh, yeah. I think that they're probably very knowledgeable, but I suspect that they have limited resources and I'm not sure how great the interests are for California statewide. They're doing the negotiating, but I still think that the issues are very, very local. And the other thing is that you have to look at pure mass. Nevada needs the water to continue to grow. There's tremendous dollar value there. They've maxed out their water supply. Supposedly, California, at least in the Truckee Basin, or, yeah the Martis Valley, Truckee River basin, we have not maxed out our supply. So that, I think that means that there's not as much interest as there could be if we were up against a wall and had to fight for every drop of water, as the Nevada interests are doing. Lake Tahoe, because of T-R-P-A [Tahoe Regional Planning Authority] and such, their water, their potential for growth is limited and possibly, I'm not exactly sure, but it, it looks like their, their, their water supply is reasonable.

Seney: Who do you call at the state level is you want to try to get someone's ear on these matters?

Woods: Well, the players have changed over the years. It started out it was a Jeanine Jones,⁸ and now she's, I think, in the Central Valley Project, is where she's at. There's a John Sarnin [Spelling?] now. There's a Paul Dabs [Spelling?], that's John Kramer,⁹ an attorney. (Seney: Right.) Markel [Spelling?]. I forgot his first name.

Seney: Yeah. I do too, and I – it's not Tom, is it?

Woods: No.

Seney: Do you call these people?

Woods: Not that often now.

Seney: Yeah.

Woods: I did months ago and years ago.

Seney: What would you call them about to talk about?

Woods: Well, what they're negotiating. They would either call me and say, "Well this, we had a language meeting or a drafting meeting and this is the language we came up with. Is it reasonable or is it not reasonable? Is it something you could buy into?" That type of conversation. Yeah. I think the negotiations, as all negotiations, is kind

⁸ Jeanine Jones participated in Reclamation's Newlands Series oral history project. See, Jeanine Jones, *Oral History Interview*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interview conducted by Donald B. Seney, edited by Donald B. Seney and desktop published by Andrew H. Gahan, historian, Bureau of Reclamation, 2016, <https://www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html>.

⁹ John Kramer participated in Reclamation's Newlands Series oral history project. See, John Kramer, *Oral History Interview*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interview conducted by Donald B. Seney, edited by Donald B. Seney and desktop published by Andrew H. Gahan, historian, Bureau of Reclamation, 2016, <https://www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html>.

of a one of attrition. And the people with the bucks are going to end up on top because they'll wear out the people that don't have the money, (Seney: Yeah.) or don't have the staff. And, I think California, I don't believe California has been clear on that. Fact is, I think that California, the Truckee River basin people became interested in TROA after the train left the station. The California interests at Lake Tahoe have been doing that through the bi-state compact and such for ten, fifteen years, maybe twenty years. (Seney: Yeah.) And so, when the public law was being discussed they were right onboard and (Seney: Yeah.) they were up to snuff. I don't believe any of the Truckee interests were onboard when the public law was being discussed by Congress. And it wasn't until after it was passed and TROA started to come out with some preliminary drafts that the Truckee River basin group became interested. That's personal opinion.

Seney: Yeah. Oh, I think that's accurate. I think they'd say so too. (Woods: Yeah.) That it was the drawdown at Prosser [Creek Reservoir]¹⁰ on Memorial Day weekend in 1992 (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) that sort of alarmed everyone and made obvious what, you know, the impact of that operating agreement could be and maybe would be.

Woods: But that's just one aspect of the Truckee River Operating Agreement.

Seney: Right.

Woods: Depletion is another. The 32,000 acre feet. Why did we end up with 32,000 acre feet? Why wasn't it fifty, or 55,000 acre feet? (Seney: Yeah.) A number of things were negotiated early on that, that the Truckee interests, they were not aware of, they were not, (Seney: Right. Right.) not on the train.

Seney: Well, for the public as a whole it does take some sort of precipitating event, doesn't it, usually (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) to get them to be interested in (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) that kind of thing? And someone like yourself, because of your (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) position is likely to have an earlier and ongoing interest in it.

Woods: Uhm-hmm.

Tahoe Regional Planning Authority

Seney: Right? Do you deal at all, much at all, with T-R-P-A and the Lake Tahoe interests? Do you have much community of interest with them?

Woods: I did ten, fifteen years ago, but now it's more of a routine operational thing. There's not a lot of dynamic changes going on there. We've ironed out the permit process, the approval process, things like that. (Seney: Yeah.) T-T-S-A has very limited

¹⁰ Prosser Creek Reservoir was the initial feature of the Washoe Project. Prosser Creek Dam and Reservoir are located on Prosser Creek approximately 1.5 miles above the confluence of Prosser Creek and the Truckee River. The dam is an earthen structure 163 feet high and 1,830 feet long. It is capable of storing 29,800 acre-feet of water for flood control, recreation and improvement of fishery flows in the Truckee River. Storage began in January 1963.

- facilities in T-R-P-A's land, or area of influence. It would be from Tahoe City to Alpine, is about the only place. So, it's just a couple miles of (Seney: Yeah.) pipeline. It's not like – and, we do not have improvements going on there.
- Seney: And most of the growth, for your purposes, is likely to be outside of the basin, isn't it?
- Woods: It is now. Yes.
- Seney: Yeah. Yeah. So, if you're . . .
- Woods: Truckee and Squaw Valley
- Seney: Yeah. Right. Those would be the areas that are building up then most rapidly, huh?
- Woods: Yeah.
- Seney: Yeah.
- Woods: Someplace or another. I just was reviewing (taps table) – oh, I passed it on. Squaw Valley has a new project. The village at Squaw Valley.
- Seney: And, they would always run something like that by you, wouldn't they, when it was in its (Woods: Well, it's . . .) planning stages?
- Woods: It's California, California law that projects be reviewed by responsible agencies. And T-T-S-A would be one agency that would review (Seney: Yeah.) the larger projects.
- Seney: Well, you guys are absolutely critical to growth. I mean, if there's no capacity in this plant, if you get up to capacity you're not, (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) that's it. I mean, no more building permits and all the rest of it. How many household connections? Do you know how many you serve?

TTSA Customers

- Woods: Right now there's about 32,000 facilities hooked up to us. And, that would be, the bulk of it would be residential. Maybe about fifteen or twenty percent would be commercial, restaurants to bars, to ski resorts, to gas stations, supermarkets, things like that.
- Seney: If you don't lay another brick, put in another pipe, how many connections can you have at this point?
- Woods: We could probably have another 5,000 to 8,000 connections. Somewhere in there.

Seney: And, if you don't, if you don't undertake the expense, and which I assume you think probably you will?

Woods: Yes.

Seney: This looks like it's pretty much going to go.

Woods: Well, one we're well along the way into designing the, at least the preliminary report (Seney: Right. Right.) and environmental work.

Seney: Well, you've got to pretty much get that done before you can go to the voters for this, don't you?

Woods: Yes.

Seney: To see that it's feasible?

Woods: Uhm-hmm.

Seney: And you've got to get out the brochures, and then you've got to gather the political support, I would think, from the real estate and recreation communities and all that kind of thing, and make sure you've got no blazing opposition that the State's not going to come down and say, "This is a bad idea." Are you likely to get opposition to this, do you think?

Woods: Well, there's, opposition can show up often. Fifteen years ago, when we expanded the plant the last time, the Air Resources Control Board opposed the project. CALTRANS [California Department of Transportation] opposed the project.

Seney: Because of the traffic implications?

Woods: Because of increased traffic, (Seney: Yeah.) because of increased air pollution. (Seney: Right.) And so, we ended up expending over \$600,000 for mitigation to expand the plant. That was almost, well it was probably about eight percent of what it cost to expand the plant we spent in mitigation fees.

Seney: How did you, what did do to mitigate for the traffic and air pollution?

Woods: We bought a few buses for Lake Tahoe, built those little bus, little shelters, bus stop shelters, and rebuilt the train station downtown Truckee. So that evaporated \$600,000 in short order.

Seney: Do you think you'll have to do that again, something like that?

Woods: I don't know. We're approaching it this time such that we're not going to be growth-inducing. Fifteen years ago, they determined that we were growth-inducing. Well

-
- now, we're going to make sure that we fit in with all of the general plans of the area. And if we're not growth-inducing, then I would not expect us to get challenged on growth-inducing. Now, it could be that we'll get challenged by Nevada interests, E-P-A [Environmental Protection Agency], possibly the Indian tribes (Seney: Right. Right.) could oppose us because of just growing. (Seney: Right.) We'll see what happens there.
- Seney: How can you not be growth-inducing? How can this not be?
- Woods: Because we're serving the plans, the community plans.
- Seney: Oh, okay.
- Woods: And we're just backfilling their plans.
- Seney: I see.
- Woods: We're not out leading (Seney: I see.) construction.
- Seney: I see what you're doing now.
- Woods: We're just serving (Seney: Right.) what's already deemed reasonable growth.
- Seney: So, when you look at what, Placer County, Nevada County, is it?
- Woods: And El Dorado.
- Seney: And El Dorado County?
- Woods: From Emerald Bay, north.
- Seney: And you look at what their projected growth is given their general plans?
- Woods: Yes.
- Seney: You're fitting into that (Woods: Yes.) with your expansion? If you were going beyond it, then you could be accused of growth-inducing?
- Woods: Yes.
- Seney: Ah. So, when you get finished with this expansion, how many more connections can you have?
- Woods: Well, we'll go up about from 7.4 up to about 9.6. So, that's 2.2 million gallons, 2.2 at – there'll be about ten or eleven thousand connections, I think, if my numbers are correct.
-

Seney: Yeah.

Woods: Yeah.

Seney: So, in other words you'll double, you've got about five now, wiggle room for 5,000?

Woods: Yeah.

Seney: You put another 5,000 on there and you'll have a total of ten?

Woods: Right.

Seney: Yeah.

Woods: Yeah.

Seney: Think that'll be the end of it, or who knows?

Woods: Well, it'll be probably long past your life and my life.

Seney: Yeah. (Laugh)

Woods: So, someone else will look at that challenge.

Seney: Yeah. Yeah. Because that should run you quite a while, (Woods: Yeah.) I would think, to add another 10,000 (Woods: Yeah.) connections? And, this will be, you'll be supervising the project as general manager? That is you'll, (Woods: Probably.) the contractors, but it'll be your overall responsibility?

Woods: Yeah.

Seney: Looking forward to it?

Woods: Sure.

Seney: I think it would be kind of interesting.

Woods: Yeah. It brings some excitement.

Seney: Yeah. Building things is fun.

Woods: Uhm-hmm.

Seney: This will be a big toy, huh?

Woods: That's what engineers are for, is to (Laugh) build things.

Seney: That's, they love to do that. That's right.

Woods: Yeah.

Seney: We study them. You build them. Right?

Woods: That's right.

Political Contacts

Seney: That's right. Well, I can't think of anything else to ask you about if you deal much with Senator [Harry] Reid's¹¹ office on any of these things? Do you ever have any contact with him on, or his people I should say?

Woods: Very seldom do we have contact with the Nevada interests or Nevada politicians. We would have contact with California senators and California's congressman, prior to (Seney: Yeah.) Senator Reid's.

Seney: Would they likely come to you, or you go to them on matters?

Woods: Unfortunately, they probably will never come to us.

Seney: So, (Laugh) I take it you've probably been bending their ear a little bit about some of the TROA questions?

Woods: Actually, we've kind of held off on that, waiting to see how they respond to our initial. That'll be one of the next options, is to bring the politicians in and see if they can help us.

Seney: If you can't negotiate it out the way (Woods: Right.) you want it?

Woods: Right.

Seney: Yeah. Speaking of which, when you, when you got that language you wanted in Public Law 101-618. Who did you, who did you talk to in the Congress about that?

Woods: Hmm. We worked with . . .

Seney: Now you're really smiling here.

Woods: Yeah.

¹¹ Senator Harry Reid served the state of Nevada in the U.S. Senate from 1987 to 2017. Senator Reid also participated in Reclamation's Newlands Series oral history project. See, Harry Reid, *Oral History Interview*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interview conducted by Donald B. Seney, edited by Donald B. Seney and further edited and desktop published by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, 2013, <https://www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html>.

Seney: And I know when you're . . .

Woods: Well, one, I'm drawing a blank on . . .

Seney: Oh, are you? Okay.

Woods: There was a congressman from this area.

Seney: Wally Herger?

Woods: No. His, his predecessor.

Seney: Wasn't Chappy, was it? Because, Chappy was . . .

Woods: Chappy was his – it was between Chappy and . . .

Seney: And Herger [Spelling?]?

Woods: Yeah. There was a Biz Johnson.

Seney: Biz Johnson preceded Chappy [Spelling?]. Chappy [Spelling?] . . .

Woods: Chappy [Spelling?]? And then, I want to say Chandler [Spelling?], but that's wrong.

Seney: I can't . . .

Woods: It's not, Chris Chandler is a State Assemblyman. There was a federal . . .

Seney: Well, when you review the manuscript maybe you can, you can insert the (Woods: Yeah.) name at that point?

Woods: Yeah.

Seney: It'll come to you. So, you worked with him on that language?

Woods: Well, he was helpful. Yeah.

Seney: What about, did you go to [Governor] Pete Wilson or (Woods: No.) [Senator Alan] Cranston [Spelling?], on that?

Woods: No. We cc'd and had contact with them. The issues I had were, again, pretty straightforward. (Seney: Yeah.) And so, what we did is we worked them out, let's say, on kind of engineer to engineer, (Seney: Yeah.) and then kind of wiggled it in there. And, oh gosh, a guy with glasses, Mormon guy?

Seney: John Doolittle?

-
- Woods: Nope. His predecessor. Who did he take over for?
- Seney: God, I can't remember now.
- Woods: He came through here and he took a picture of me, his staff did, and put it in one of his little flyers, and we were standing out over a clarifier. Oh, gosh.
- Seney: Doolittle went a long time. He was elected in 1980. Was he your . . .
- Woods: It was, no, '92 I think, Doolittle.
- Seney: Was it?
- Woods: Doolittle hadn't been around. He was a State Senator.
- Seney: Senator?
- Woods: A Senator?
- Seney: Yeah. For a while. Yeah.
- Woods: Yeah. And now he's . . .
- Seney: Yeah. Right. I guess that is right, '92?
- Woods: Yeah. I think so. And it was a guy that stepped down, he stepped down. He says, "I've had enough of this. It's time for me to return to California and be with my family."
- Seney: I can't remember who it is.
- Woods: Tall. Taller, glasses. Not Chappy [Spelling?]. Not Chandler. There's a street in Sacramento with that family name, a minor street. Anyway, (Seney: Yeah.) I'll, I'll . . .
- Seney: We can insert it. Yeah.
- Woods: Yeah.
- Seney: Right. I also have a list of congressmen. I might be able to look it up and remember (Woods: Yeah.) who it is as well. But you worked through them in order to get what you (Woods: Yes.) wanted on 101-618? And I take it you, obviously Reid had no real objection to that or it wouldn't have gotten into the bill. He must have realized that that was going to be a necessary accommodation and one that didn't impact him negatively, particularly?

Woods: Right.

Seney: Yeah.

Woods: We went back and there was a Senate Subcommittee hearing and it was chaired by . .

Seney: [Senator] Bill Bradley?¹²

Woods: Yeah.

Seney: Yeah. Right.

Woods: And it was . . .

Seney: Subcommittee on Water and Power?

Woods: Uhm-hmm.

Seney: Yeah.

Woods: So, you've, other people have talked about that?

Seney: Right. Right. Yeah.

Woods: Yeah. And he was very impressive.

Seney: Bradley was?

Woods: Yes.

Seney: Yeah.

Woods: Very much so.

Seney: Yeah. Well, he apparently really, in fact I had arranged to interview him in the, when I was in Washington, (Woods: Uhm-hmm.) but I've been there twice, and his mother was ill, so we had to cancel it. But he's promised to see me again. And so, when I go back . . .

Woods: He's going to be in Sacramento for that Perspectives.

Seney: Yeah. I know he is. Yeah.

Woods: Yeah.

¹² Senator Bill Bradley served the state of New Jersey in the U.S. Senate from 1979 to 1997.

-
- Seney: I'm going to see him probably back on the East Coast.
- Woods: Uhm-hmm.
- Seney: And, when he's traveling he apparently doesn't have much time.
- Woods: Probably. Yeah.
- Seney: His schedule is pretty tight. And, I'd rather see him when he's not distracted and in a hotel room 3,000 miles from home.
- Woods: Yeah.
- Seney: Because, yeah, apparently he's a very impressive guy. You must have met Tom Jensen, then, his staff person, (Woods: Yes.) who's . . .
- Woods: Yes. Yes.
- Seney: I interviewed him. (Woods: Yeah.) He's also very impressive.
- Woods: And it was actually, that was one of the key players that we worked with was Tom Jensen.
- Seney: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.
- Woods: Yeah. On the staff level. And, I remember being . . .
- Seney: Jim Burney, maybe, on the republican side? Did you have any dealings with him?
- Woods: Yes.
- Seney: He was the republican staffer.
- Woods: I remember that name, too. (Seney: Right.) Yeah.
- Seney: Right. Right.
- Woods: Yeah.
- Seney: I've interviewed both of them (Woods: Yeah.) and they're very able, very interesting people.
- Woods: Yes. I'm not sure what they're doing now.
- Seney: Tom's in private legal practice and Jim Burney is the Chief Counsel for the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Woods: Huh.

Seney: So, he's, and they're real interesting guys. (Woods: Yeah.) They're really bright, you know. And Tom, I thought, was a very fair-minded guy.

Woods: Yes. I remember a bus tour that Sierra Pacific (Seney: Right.) put together, and we went on a bus tour. It started in Tahoe and ended up at Lake Pyramid. (Seney: Yeah.) All day.

Seney: They're famous for their bus tours. Yeah.

Woods: Yeah.

Seney: Yeah. And they're, you know, they're very good at getting their viewpoint across and using their resources in this way.

Woods: Yeah.

Seney: Right. Well, that's all the questions I have (Woods: Okay.) for you. And anything else you want to add, that . . .

Woods: No.

Seney: All right.

Woods: I probably added too much.

Seney: No, you didn't. Thank you very much.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 2. AUGUST 24, 1998.
END OF INTERVIEW.