EXCERPT

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(The following was transcribed from a tape recording.)

MR. ELCKER: When there was no one else talking about things like overgrazing and destruction of riparian areas, there was Denzel Ferguson (unintelligible), there was Grant Hawkins and there was Johanna Wald, and I have personally learned a lot from them the last few years myself as I have been, I think, maybe one of the newer wave of accidents to come on, even though, as someone said, I work for the national wildlife organization so we're a bit slow on the learning curve sometimes on some issues, and on this one as well.

But my short topic today is, now that you've really got -- I mean, you've got the understanding and the -- the background form the best there is. My thing to you is, well, how do we make a difference and, more importantly -- I mean, these people on the panel, we're -- they're making a difference. It's because of them we're getting someplace but how is it that you people in the audience, you people sitting here early Sunday morning, what are you going to do, because it's you people who're going to drive this.

They're all tired of hearing from us four in the agencies. We're about -- you know, they
can turn around and lock the door if they see Johanna
coming in -- out of her car.

(Audience laughter.)

MR. ELICKER: And with Grant Hawkins,
they put up the closed sign right in his face.

(Audience Laughter.)

MR. ELICKER: But it's the people who are
coming on more and more. The people who're using the
public lands, they are the ones, with the letters and
phone calls, they're the ones that are driving this.

It's not just a few (unintelligible) the professional
staff.

Now, here's what I've been doing for the
last three years is looking for any opportunity to make a
difference and when we talk about public lands in the
west, there's -- there's a bunch of different types of
public lands out there.

First of all, there's that BLM land and
that is just land in the worst shape, seventy percent
less than good condition, and that's hammered. Drive
through Wyoming, Arizona or parts of eastern Oregon.
Let's face it. It looks bad because it's been beat to
death for a hundred years, or more.

There's fish and wildlife service land
and those are the refuges and they present other oppor-
tunities to make a difference on grazing because BLM, for instance, has a lot of multiple use land. Land for grazing has got to be part of the scheme. On refuges, for instance, on paper at least, they can't -- they can't do any management activity unless it's compatible for what the refuge was established for. That gives you a different kind of opportunity to take down the cowboys.

If it's forest service land, again, that's more multiple use land but, within the forest service, there are different things. There's wilderness boundaries. There's a bunch of delineations in how the forest service would manage its land that may give you an opportunity on dealing with the grazing issue.

And then, of course, there's the issue of state land. Now, we look at Oregon, for example. We have state wildlife refuges. We have state parks. We have monuments, so to speak. We have trust lands, which are six hundred thousand acres in Harney and Malheur Counties in Oregon, which is supposed to be through school funds, like Utah, which is used for grazing, and then there's special board of forestry lands, another seven hundred thousand acres, so -- and all this stuff at one time or another has got cows on it. Pretty much.

But -- so I guess where the key is -- how do you make a difference is you need to decide, first of
all, where you can make a difference, if you use a state
park, if you see the refuge, learning about how that land
is supposed to be governed.

And I have a little section I was going
to talk about how -- how bad the problem is and -- but
Denzel's laid all that out. Let's just say there's two
hundred and fifty million plus acres of public land in
the federal government alone that gets hammered by
grazing, BLM and forest service.

And the BLM lands, again, because they're
lower in elevation and more arid, been pounded longer by
more cows, probably in the worst shape.

But -- I mean, if you should look at the
State of Washington, for instance, which has about two
hundred and fifty thousand acres in wildlife department
land, so-called wildlife management areas, they're
grazing almost half, maybe two-thirds of that land in
Washington State right now with, quote, wildlife purposes
and we'll talk about that in a second.

Anyway, it's obvious the western states
have a long history of overgrazing and, in fact, what
most ranchers would like to do, and most still are, is
they'd like to practice that Columbus method of grazing,
which is you put them out in the spring and you try to
discover them in the fall.
(Audience laughter.)

MR. ELICKER: How ranchers make money in arid western public lands is they don't pay anything to put the cows out there really, a few dollars a AUM. Then they're getting subsidized with fencing and water resources and pipelines and all these, quote, range improvements that Grant and Denzel has so nobly talked about, and if they didn't get that cheap AUM and didn't get all those other range improvement subsidies, most of them really would have a very difficult time running cows out there.

In other words, if you start making them pay their true cost of what they're doing, they're going to fold up. They can't make money on cows they actually got to work at, not when you got areas in Arizona that I'm told two hundred and twenty acres to feed a cow for a month.

They can't -- if they got to go out and move that cow around six times, by the time they're done, they've lost their shirt.

So one of the keys is, when I talk about opportunities to make a difference, is not only the fact -- you know, what everyone likes is the big victory. You load up them cattle trucks for the last time and it goes riding off into the sunset and they never come back. }
MR. ELICKER: But you can win a lot more victories than that ultimate one. You can win a lot more victories by making him pay for what he does out there and by making it so expensive in his operation and making all these changes for him to continue to run the cattle on the public lands, he goes broke. He can't do it. He has to come up with other ways to be a rancher.

Because I can tell you, when Grant Hawkins talks about way of life, I just knew that Grant Hawkins had been around a long time because when you -- really when you get right down to it, the boots and the hat and the big belt buckle, for them guys, it's a way of life.

And one of the reasons they're so strong politically is that plays so well in Washington D.C., with everyone dressed like me, blue pinstriped blue pinstriped suit, and here comes Joe Rancher from Arizona. Just flew in on a jet -- on his Lockheed. Flies in to see his Congressman, talking loud, walking down the hallway, big belt buckle. They love him.

(Audience laughter.)

MR. ELICKER: That plays well in Washington D.C. You know, the big rancher, "Come on, Fred, we'll have a steak at the ranch next time you're
out there."

And that's why they own the western Senate in some respects and, also, the very good thing that Grant said, those guys pay. They've milked that political system countywide, statewide, federal-wide for generations and they pay. They pay big and we don't pay or we haven't started paying and so that's why they own the western Senate. That's why they own so many Congressmen in the House, because them good ole boys ante up. They know it's part of the game and they don't hesitate.

When they had that Mike Synar call for a vote which would increase the fair market values last legislative session in Congress, okay, and he just dumped that, the cowboys didn't know where that came from. That came out of nowhere, Synar of Oklahoma saying, "We're going to push it through as a rider amendment. We're going to make them pay fair market value in five years. That's $8.48."

You can bet that the ranchers hit town on Friday night. Hundreds of them in the hat and the boots and the big buckles working the halls of Congress and they did it. They put it off. They won. They beat us. They know how to play the game. They know when to get in the jet and get into the east to win (unintel-
So, they're tough. They're very politically, they're very tough.

But one thing that we have got them on is that they can't take the heat. They can't take the scrutiny of people objectively looking at what they're doing on the land and I mean whether it's the GAO, whether it's a wildlife refuge manager who wants to make a difference, whether it's a forest service ranger who's finally decided he has had enough, when you focus the spotlight on what we pay on our public land (unintelligible) for them guys to be ranchers and have a way of life, they can't stand the heat. It's too hot and when you get -- they said about the poll. You know, recreation's top, grazing at the bottom.

Most people in the east don't realize that there's all these cows on their public land. They don't realize that. They don't know anything about the western public lands. They don't know anything about grazing and that's why I (unintelligible) go back to Washington D.C. For all they know, it's the Marlboro man and he's pretty tough.

(Audience laughter.)

MR. ELICKER: So when it's -- so whenever we can focus on this and say, "What about the water
quality, what about all the siltation in the stream, what about the Lahontan cutthroat endangered species,” all of a sudden, this guy’s backpeddling (unintelligible) even with the boys from the universities helping, which the universities do a lot.

When we find things out like (unintelligible) the big changes in (unintelligible) that ten or fifteen years ago, when they talked about western streams, and the word I don’t think -- which had just been coined, "riparian area," which is the small strip of vegetation on each side of that flow of water. Well, for a long time, that was called the sacrifice area. In other words, they put the cows out there, they destroy all that streamside vegetation. It just turns into dust, and the reasoning was, well, they’ve got to destroy all that green stuff down below and then they start moving up the hill to the grass and that was accepted. That was what was the problem.

But yet, in the last ten or fifteen years, with various people doing a lot of work, we realized how important that vegetation is along the streamside for wildlife, for stream water quality, to even have a perennial flowing stream, and it’s been really one of the best turnarounds for us, this new word, "riparian areas," where the cows cannot really be
there and still have a healthy stream.

So that's been a real focus for us and riparian areas are a favorite place for us as recreationists or other users of public lands most of the time too. We all like to be by those streams and that has really helped us on hammering on the cowboys in (unintelligible) the American public lands right now.

So I try and look for opportunities within the agencies, though I have to say up front I agree with George Wilson when he said, "There's no reforming the BLM." You're just not going to fix this. There's nothing we can do to really fix them, particularly at the top, but there are always, I find, always within agencies, there are some people who want to make some changes.

There are some people who really take to heart that they're stewards of our public lands and I find them in the BLM once in a while, probably least there than anywhere, but I find them very much in the forest service and I find them on the fish and wildlife service at times. I find them in state wildlife areas and those are the people that we in this room have to focus on.

We have to get to know those refuge managers. We have to get to know those district managers
because you'd be surprised sometimes that -- how helpful they are because they have been coming up in a system to which, when they tried to do something on their own, they got crushed, their supervisors or politically whoever it was.

And we said, "Well, you know, we should make some differences in the grazing program or we shouldn't be grazing here. We got a lot of problems." But their supervisor said, "Shut up and sit down. We got a rangecon here. He'll handle this. Grazing as usual, no trouble."

Don't forget, (unintelligible) no one likes to make any trouble. Bad news.

So what you have to do and what I try to do is give them opportunities and give them a way to use us in some respect.

In other words, a BLM guy once called me and said, "Roy, I got this area up on the pueblos that -- I mean, the whole pueblo's destroyed by grazing but this area's worse than the others. It is really bad."

I said, "Well, gee, what can we do about it?" He says, "Well, you know, not many people go up there so I don't have anybody complaining." He said, "God, Roy, if I can just get a couple strong letters
from people that may have gone up there once or twice
to say how bad it is and what the hell is going on up
there," he said, "that's all I need."

He needs some cover and I find out more
and more in the agencies, you complaining, they'll run
with that. They'll run with that.

And all the agencies, even sometimes the
BLM, which is really the very worst because those people
really -- they've been -- from the day they walked in the
door and went to work for the BLM, they've been told,
"We graze cattle. Take care of the ranchers. If you
don't, it's your career. If you don't you're out."

Everyday. Everyday they're told that
and think about what a crushing load that is to carry,
knowing that if you get in any rancher's face, you could
be sent up there on some Alaska refuge in the middle of
the Aleutians, because it's real and it used to be a
lot more real, so think about that.

Anyway, let me talk about some issues
here and I know you've been sitting a long time and I
appreciate that.

Grank Hawkins talked about the grazing
fees issue and I think there's a real split on the
grazing fees issue. (When you talk to some of the BLM,
they say, "Boy, if you could get that grazing fee up to
fair market value, you would really force a lot of guys out. They just couldn't economically pay the real cost of grazing so you'll be weeding out what is called the marginal operators if you raise the grazing fees up high.

But the other side of the coin is that, I think and others think, that if we raise grazing fees to fair market value, I'm not so sure somebody isn't going to come in and take over the permit the marginal guy's dropped. And so I think there's something to be gained so I'm not positively willing to put all my eggs in that basket, that grazing fees is going to make a huge difference in what the public land looks like.

(But it's certainly an issue where if it comes up or you have some way to push it, with a letter or something else, it's a worthwhile thing to do. It's change and what the ranchers don't want is change. Anytime we can change anything that happens out there, they don't like it and it means that they got to pay more of a cost. You make them pay and pay and pay.)

There's other issues, for instance, like we can take this broad brush planning approach and, last year, Joe Feller came from Arizona State or the University of Arizona -- I can't remember which -- and he talked about that he is -- he is administratively working through all these BLM documents and that he is a -- he's an
affected interest now.

Well, I'm an affected interest and (unintelligible) is an affected interest in probably like sixty or seventy-five different allotments in Oregon now and I can tell you, you get every week a crushing amount of paper. The BLM does nothing else but put out paper. It doesn't say anything (audience laughter) you know, but that's stuff you have to deal with and so, yourself, you have to, you know, if you were out there on a regular basis on a particular public land that you have a deep affinity for, you know, talk to the BLM, get yourself declared an affected interest, which you can just write a letter and, in Oregon, they're real -- it's real easy to do. They have standing orders in the BLM now that if someone says, "I want to be an affected interest on a particular piece of public property," you get it.

Now, in other states, they have been fighting it and it may go up to administrative law court in BLM I think -- I think in Utah, or I'm not sure, one of the states, where the ranchers hate that. They don't want anyone else but them to be, quote, the affected interest.

But that's something you can do and, in Oregon, the BLM has standing orders in the solicitor's
office to grant it to whoever wants. They put you on the
same footing as the ranchers, in some respect, on paper
at least.

Another thing, you know, we talk about
the actual on-the-ground planning they do. They can do
something now called allotment evaluation planning. The
BLM's got more planning than anybody in the world. That's
why the land looks so bad.

(Audience laughter.)

MR. ELICKER: But, you know, I'm in this
allotment evaluation plan now I'm an affected interest
in an (unintelligible) affected allotment and I get their
evaluation which, of course, what they talk about,
"riparian areas are in poor condition and in a downward
trend." That means to dust.

(Audience laughter.)

MR. ELICKER: You know, time and again,
I'll see, "bottom of the canyon, downward trend, poor
condition," but, and here's the -- so now the allotment
evaluation plan's been done, monitoring's been done, and
here's the recipe for reform. Here's what they tell me
how much better it's going to look now in the next ten
years.

They'll say, "Strive for a ten-percent
improvement in riparian woody canopies," which means
instead of one willow per mile, you'll have, at the end of ten years, ten willows per mile.

That's nothing. It means it's gone from poor to poor condition.

I mean, so even when you think you're going to get involved in a big planning machine where it's going to make a big difference, there's nobody high up in the agency that wants to change things, that really wants to make things better. That's why Grant Hawkins and everybody else in the state, they throw up their hands and say, "The BLM's done for," and they're right.

You can get in there in the middle of all of this and then, for all of that work, what you're going to get is what you're going to strive for, this ten-percent improvement on an area that's already destroyed.

(Audience laughter.)

MR. ELICKER: That would be pretty frustrating.

There are some other better issues though than that that you can really focus on and, for instance, I know the endangered species one Johanna mentioned, it's getting to be better and better all the time.

Many fish species in the desert are in very bad shape due to overgrazing and I know -- I mean, let's give everyone an example. On the Sheldon Antelope
Refuge this year, they have the Sheldon chewy chub which is a very particular desert fish species out there and on the wildlife refuges, national wildlife refuges, their standard thing is that if it's a candidate species, you know, a candidate under law, not on the threatened or endangered list, but candidate for that list, on a refuge they got treated as threatened or endangered. They got to manage for it. They got to be aware of it.

Well, one of the permittees bit the dust on Sheldon this year because he's the guy grazing on the Fish Creek Drainage where the fish was and they said, "Hey, Sheldon chewy chub, you're out." I mean, you just keep -- I mean that's -- I mean the ultimate picture is, of course, the last cattle truck driving into the sunset but that's not really how you win. How you win is one at a time, one at a time. He goes out of business. He dies. You wait him out.

(Audience laughter.)

MR. ELICKER: But you win. You know?

There was last year five permittees on Hart Mountain Refuge and this year there are four, if at all, thanks to this year's suit, but there's only four permittees. Of course, one guy got old and died. I waited him out.

(Audience laughter.)
MR. ELICKER: You know? They die every year.

( So, between the endangered species and other kinds of riparian arguments, it gives you just more handles, more things, to make them have to plan around when they plan for the cattle. )

Again, I mentioned the fact -- and I'll wrap this up -- I mentioned the fact that one letter -- as a friend of mine from the BLM said, "Roy, all I need is one good letter from a guy who was up there who can say, 'Boy this looks bad,'" and then he'll have to go to his manager and say, "Look, what am I going to do? The public -- we got to do something -- the public is right here causing trouble."

(Audience laughter.)

MR. ELICKER: And if you got the right person and the right match here, it can make a difference. You're not -- and here's the difference. When you talk about the ranchers going to Congress, who is it, when the rangecon gets into his office, who's waiting for him to take him out for coffee, to either yell at him or slap him on the back and offer him a steak? It's the rancher.

Them cowboys can put them BLM guys -- out in those outlying districts like Winnemucca and every
place else, they -- they, you know, get up with them and
they put them to bed. And when you got to see the same
guy week after week and you're often yelled and screamed
at about his cows, what are you going to do? You got to
try and deal with the guy. You got to make him happy.
Just get him out of here.

And that is something that -- and you
heard me talk about this -- we do not do enough. When
you go out to the public lands, when you go out camping
in the spring, when you go anywhere on an allotment and
you don't like what you see, don't call me, which some
people do. They say, "God, Roy, it's really bad up on
Hart Mountain," and the elk hunters are the worst.

I mean, hunters, you know, are really
fixated on that one season. They're never out there
really camping or hiking or anything else but when it's
elk season or it's deer season, boom. For decades or
generations, they all -- the whole family goes up to
Hart Mountain or all of them go out to eastern Oregon,
everybody hunting deer, and then, as soon as they get
back to Portland, within the first few days, it starts,
and they call me. They say, "God, Roy, my family's been
going up to this allotment for years and, boy, does it
look bad."

(Audience laughter.)
MR. ELICKER: And I'll say, "Well, who'd you tell?" They say, "Well, we called you (unintelligible) wanted to call you as soon as we got back in town."

(Audience laughter.)

MR. ELICKER: Don't call me. Call the forest service. Call the BLM. Call them because they will make a note. They'll have to deal with that. You will cause them stress.

(Audience laughter.)

MR. ELICKER: And when you cause them stress, you win. There's a person don't like this, causing the cowboy stress. That's why you're here.

And it's the same with all of us on the panel. When you call them, when you cause them stress, we win.

The best -- the worst thing you can do is go home and get pissed off and forget about it or don't do anything. Then they win because they got what they want and you haven't bothered to mess with them and that's what hurts us.

So, let me unravel the story. We were very successful this spring in throwing the cattle off Rooster Rock State Park and the Columbia River Gorge and it's very interesting. I mean, all of us lived in that end of the gorge, west end of the gorge. We're back
against Portland. And for years, we have driven past Rooster Rock State Park and we knew there was cows in there, on the wetlands, but, I mean, it's a state park.

I mean, I -- even I, who drove (unintelligible) never assumed they were on state land. I would assume that was a part of the park that, you know, was owned or private inholding or -- so -- so one day I get a call and they say -- and they say, "Well, God, you ought to see what the cows did to Rooster Rock State Park."

I said, "Well, what cows?" They said, "The cows that are on the state park."

"What cows? What do you mean?" I said, "That's state park land."

"But they've been grazing them for years and years."

Jeez, I never knew that. I mean, I drove past there all the time. Never thought that those cows were on state park land. Turned out, them cows have been thee since the park was traded for, I don't know, fifteen years or so. The guy pays no money to graze there. The cows are there, quote, to control the blackberries.

(Audience laughter.)

MR. ELICKER: I mean -- and that's what the state park -- what the state park manager told us. He said, "Oh, no, we've got to have those cows there."
(Audience laughter.)

MR. ELICKER: "I mean, without them, the blackberries would take over."

(Audience laughter.)

MR. ELICKER: Well, anybody who's ever read anything about livestock, knows anything about livestock, knows blackberries (unintelligible) cows.

(Audience laughter.)

MR. ELICKER: Cows -- I mean, when you drive -- drive past some old pasture on the west side of the mountains here, what do you see? You see little tiny thing of grass and all these big blackberry bushes because the cows don't like to eat those big ole blackberries.

So, what we -- I just made a real faux pas on that one.

(Audience laughter.)

MR. ELICKER: Then they tried to argue it was controlling other types of vegetation. You know, that vegetation just gets in the way and we've got to control it here on the state park.

Well, anyway, between the audubon society and native plant society and a whole bunch of other groups, we all got together and demanded a tour out there and, boy, we beat the park service guy brainless.
MR. ELICKER: He was a new guy who was a district supervisor and he said, "Well, I'm new here and I'm from Alaska and I don't know much about this."

Well, let me try -- he tried to talk about the fact that the cows provided a glimpse of the pastoral splendor of the gorge.

MR. ELICKER: That they -- that they did control blackberries and that, no, just because the mud's all torn up and all the cow shit's in the water didn't mean they really interfered with water quality.

MR. ELICKER: Well, between about forty-five of us, he got the message and the message was, "We want these stinking cows off our park and we want it done today."

And then, I kind of -- being the nice guy I am -- said, "Well, it doesn't have to be today. When's his contract end?"

He said, "Well, a few months."

"Well, okay, when his contract's over, that's the end of it."

And, sure enough, state park, they hemmed and hawed. They did a management plan. They did every-
thing they could do but, in the end, they were faced with a very irate group of people from a lot of different groups that were furious over this and they -- the guy's not -- the (unintelligible). After twelve years or fifteen years or twenty years of grazing out there, the cows are gone off Rooster Rock.

I chalked up three (unintelligible) dead cows on the side of my desk.

(Audience laughter.)

MR. ELICKER: And that's, you know, and that's why I said the opportunities with a state park, just find the opportunities.

(Tape ends.)

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I certify that I am a certified court reporter in the State of Nevada; that I transcribed the foregoing pages from a tape recording provided by Wayne Hage of Tonopah, Nevada; and that the transcript constitutes a true and correct report of the same to the best of my knowledge, skill and ability.

DanRa Boscovich
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