

Interviewer: So this is April 11th, and this is Mark Solomon from the University of Idaho. I'm here at Bob Moate's home looking out a beautiful window, and going to continue talking about what the university is proposing to do here, and then talk with you about your experience on the lake and how you've seen it change over time.

Bob Moate: Okay.

Interviewer: So just to round up the circle on what we're doing here, we're going to finish using this as a pilot project to better understand our capacity to help answer these questions, and hopefully by September or October, we'll actually be able to present some results to you and to everyone else in the watershed that will hopefully address some of these rather troubling questions.

Bob Moate: Well, we're always interested to give people that are familiar with the situation to help it if we can.

Interviewer: Yeah. So most of the questions I'm gonna ask today are very similar to the ones that you received in the little mail survey, and the purpose of today's questions is to, one, get more information that might have been able to be answered by checking a box. And if there are issues that we did not raise that we should have in the survey that are important to the issues of the lake, this is how we find them.

Because when we send out a survey, we do it from what our best guesses are as to what the questions are. And, in fact, we made sure that we talked with a number of people in the watershed and shared that survey in a draft form first, so we got somewhat of a blessing that we were on kind of the right track. But there are all kinds of other information, and that's why I'm here with you today. So just we'll start with the simple things of how long have you lived in the Fernan area?

Bob Moate: Since 1955.

Interviewer: Wow. So before the village...

Bob Moate: There was one house in the village – two houses in the village. [Laughter]. And they had been there for years before.

Interviewer: What brought you here?

Bob Moate: Well, my dad owned this property back from – I think he bought it in 1932 in the midst of the Depression anyway. And he had 80 acres. He lived up on the hill near above the lake on Fernan Hill Road when I was small. And then they offered to give me a piece down here when Marge and I got married, to build a home on if we'd like, and I jumped at the chance, chance of a lifetime. It's kind of interesting though because at the time, we discussed what – he gave it to me for a dollar, but he – [laughter], we kind of discussed the value a little bit, and we thought, well, it's probably – the lot is probably worth \$1,000.00. [Laughter].

Interviewer: Things do change. [Laughter].

Bob Moate: [Laughter]. Yeah, I guess.

Interviewer: So you built the house here then in '55.

Bob Moate: Yeah. The fact is he engineered the house and did a good share of the work, and I did it myself. But between him and I, I did most of it. We paired out the electrical and plumbing, but did the rest ourselves.

Interviewer: That's a testament to a lot of hard work and enjoying the fruits of labors now for quite a while.

Bob Moate: That's right. A little bit easier than though than it is now because you didn't have to worry about getting permits for everything, all this, that, and the other, you know.

Interviewer: Yeah. You built it solid, it seems.

Bob Moate: Oh yeah. It'll be here a while. *[Laughter]*.

Interviewer: So how has the lake changed in the time you've been here?

Bob Moate: Well, of course prior to when they built the dam at the far end of the lake, the lake was quite a little bit lower in the summer than it is now. And we had quite a little bit of beach below our wall down there at that time. And then of course when the dam was put in, that held the water level higher in the summer. There were some benefits, and I think possibly some maybe detrimental things about it too.

But the whole ecology of the lake has changed over the years. We went through a time; we had very few lily pads in the bay here when we moved here in '55. And the lily pads kept spreading and they got to the point where we could hardly get a boat up to the dock. I can't tell you what years these were. And we had a lot of bullfrogs at that time, and they kept us awake at night when we had the windows open. Not now.

And over the years, and I think maybe this was a result of the dam, raising the water level, the lily pads disappeared. I'm not sure. That's just my idea. But the higher water level, I think, could have had something to do with it. Another thing could have been we had quite a few muskrats. Maybe they dug out a lot of the ruts or anything. That I don't know.

Interviewer: So is what we're looking at here the what I'll call the normal level of the lake, or does it get higher and lower?

Bob Moate: Well, this year they did a little different now. Nobody is really been taking care of that dam down there. It's just kind of taking care of itself. *[Laughter]*. And that resulted in a couple of years of our yard being flooded, and so that was kind of detrimental. *[Laughter]*. It never bothered our house or septic tanks or anything, but it was a little nerve-wracking.

That was a result of the not opening the dam and letting that high water out, just leaving it closed. And of course then when the high water comes – it eventually – by the time it gets up in our yard here, then it goes over the top of the dam and it usually takes care of the problem. But I think that – I don't have any idea with the lily pads disappearing, it changed a lot of the fishing and everything in our bay here. And eventually they disappeared and

now we don't have any so that's just the difference of the ecology of the lake in some way.

Interviewer: So right now, I think the boards are still out of the dam.

Bob Moate: I think they are. They were the last time I was down there.

Interviewer: So when they put the boards in, does the lake come up higher on your wall?

Bob Moate: Oh yeah. Yeah. In fact even now, it would probably rise fairly rapidly yet even – I don't know how much water is coming in up there at the lake.

Interviewer: Yeah, I didn't go up there yet.

Bob Moate: They did – that's what I was going to mention. You had asked about normal water levels now, and it probably is pretty normal right now for this time of year.

Interviewer: So you don't ever see your beach anymore?

Bob Moate: Nope. No beach anymore. And I think that they rebuilt the highway since then, and so maybe it isn't all the dam, maybe it's the cultivation of a culvert down there. That I don't know. But I do know that it doesn't get as low as it used to.

Interviewer: How long ago do you remember being algae blooms?

Bob Moate: There has been some algae bloom. I don't remember the blue-green particularly in years past, but we've had some algae in the lake probably every year almost – some years worse than others.

Interviewer: So going back into the fifties.

Bob Moate: But the last two years has been the worst ever.

Interviewer: Right.

Bob Moate: And whether that's because of the rebuilding of the road, I don't know if that put that much nutrient into the lake or not. But of course you don't clear up the creek. That was all disturbed. That whole creek bed was disturbed up there for a mile or so. And I'm not smart enough to have the answers to it, but I do know that the worse two years has been the last two summers. That's been since the road was done. And it's been really bad.

Interviewer: Over the years, how have you used the lake: fishing, swimming, and boating?

Bob Moate: Yes. I don't do much fishing anymore. Years past, I did a lot of fishing, and of course we always had – now all I've got is a rowboat. We had a bigger boat and the kids water-skied when they were young. This was back in the – probably when they were water-skiing a lot was probably in the 1960s. And we never felt uncomfortable using the lake at all. I would have the last couple of years, but I never did years ago. Like I say, it would turn some color, but not as bad it's been the last two years.

Interviewer: And those blooms would happen at any particular time of the year?

Bob Moate: Usually start in July, and probably get the worst in August. Now, the last two years, it's been worse in July. And it's cleared up some in August and September. But I think years past, I think it was worse in August and September, and it would clear up then, as it gets cool in the fall.

Interviewer: I think you've probably already said it, but I'll just ask more directly, do you have any hunches as to why the blooms are getting worse?

Bob Moate: Well, you know, I've been puzzled about that, [laughter], and I sure don't have the answers. You know, you always think of cattle and so forth causing a lot of problems. Well, we had probably 15 or 20 times more cattle 30 years ago then we do today – very little cattle up there now. You could probably count them on two hands. And years ago, they had a dairy up there for a while and a lot of cattle.

And of course when we moved out here in 1955, I think there were only five houses past our place. Of course, now, I don't know, there are probably 20. I don't know. I haven't counted them up. But it think there was just five when we moved out here. So I don't think that the problem with the algae bloom is cattle. I pretty much convinced myself of that. More houses? I don't know.

Interviewer: Was there any – remember a noticeable change when they started putting the boards in the dam?

Bob Moate: Well, I think that – you know, when they built the dam, they original idea was to hold the water back, hold it higher, and keep it cleaner. That was the idea of the dam to start with. And I don't think it particularly kept it cleaner, I do think we did have a quite a – and I don't know where this was ____ or not, but we did have quite a little weed growth.

And I can remember having to clean the prop on the propeller on the boats and so forth pretty regularly. And this we have not had the last few years. And I think maybe that was a benefit of the dam with the higher water and maybe it eliminated some of that weed growth, and possibly, like I say, maybe the lily pads too. I don't know.

Interviewer: Who do you think is taking responsibility for reducing the algae blooms?

Bob Moate: Well, I don't think anybody has yet. [Laughter]. Maybe it would be useful to get somebody going on that. I don't know.

Interviewer: [Laughter]. Well, okay, the next question would be who should be taking responsibility?

Bob Moate: Well, I think the residents need to do what they can, and I have tried to be pretty careful over the years. I don't fertilize the lawn much, and I try to stay up from the edge of the wall there when I do fertilize to keep that from getting in the lake. Whether I'm successful or not, I don't know.

And years back, and this has been, gosh, probably 15-20 years ago now, they did put a dye in our septic system to see that was

leaching out on the lake, and at the time that they did that, there was no sign of the septic system leaking into the lake. Now, we did do quite a little bit of extra effort when we built the house to try to keep that from happening. And that is we put in two systems.

And the system goes into the septic tank, and all of this is just the bathroom on that. And the other system is the shower and automatic washer and the kitchen sink, and that goes the other direction. And I think – gosh, was that – now, I don't know whether that is helped out or not, but I think has helped. I feel as though that was well worth the extra time and effort to do that.

Interviewer: If I asked you who's taking charge of trying to do something about the algae blooms, who would you name? Who's taking a leadership role?

Bob Moate: Well, I suppose it would have to be a state issue. I don't know.

Interviewer: Well, definitely the state has a responsibility. When you look for someone to take charge, should it be the state or who should be in charge of taking care of the issue?

Bob Moate: Well, maybe the environmental quality people should. I don't know. Maybe they should be ahead of the state. That I don't know for sure.

Interviewer: Well, they're definitely the state. How do you get your information on the water quality in the lake?

Bob Moate: Well, they've been taking some samples, you know, off and on, and sometimes the lake association updates that a little bit for us. And we have not been real active in that group either, not as much so as some of the neighbors. But I know that they have monitored it fairly regularly.

Interviewer: When they built the road or reconstructed the road, they did a number of activities from working on the channel upstream to working on the banks here and building bridges. Is there any portion of that that is

more or less problematic for you in terms of what you think are causing problems here?

Bob Moate: Well, there was quite a little bit of fill particularly just – in fact, this bank over here. As you can see by looking at it that was all filled in along there. I think they did the best they could assume they had to rebuild the road, and I'm not too sure that was favorable even then. But definitely there was a lot of fill put in the lake, and whether that's causing the – more of the blue-green algae problem, I don't know, but I kind of wonder.

Interviewer: I think you also have property that I guess I would call undeveloped property. You've got the little piece here, but then you've got land up...

Bob Moate: Up on the hill. Right.

Interviewer: Do you have plans for development of that property?

Bob Moate: No.

Interviewer: Is it timbered?

Bob Moate: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you manage the timber on it?

Bob Moate: I do. We've had that under timber management for, oh gosh, probably 15-20 years. They put a logging road in, and we did do some commercial thinning. I think that was back in the eighties. You have to check these dates a little bit. *[Laughter]*. Anyway, and then I took about a third of the commercial timber off it at that time, and I thought I had it looking really nice. I cleaned up all the slash.

And then along come the ice storm. I think that was '96, I believe, and that took about another third and that left it a little bit bare after that. And I did go ahead and log what we could of that to get it out off the ground, and also cleaned up the slash. And looking at this little crick that comes down the draw behind the house here,

watching that, I never could see where we got the great deal of sentiment from that.

Of course the neighbor, the McCanns on the east side of us there, they logged it pretty heavy here in the last five years. But we still haven't seen – I don't think an excessive amount of silk coming into the lake from that.

Interviewer: When you do the logging, do you do the management of it yourself, or do you –?

Bob Moate: Yes. Uh-huh. I've done a considerable amount of study on timber management, and I felt like I could do a pretty good job myself.

Interviewer: So you did you hire a logging crew, flagged the trees, and direct them?

Bob Moate: Yes.

Interviewer: You pretty much answered all the questions I had on my mind, but, [laughter], I think you're a wealth of information so I'm trying to just pause here for a moment and go outside of my list of questions.

Bob Moate: [Inaudible] examples that I can, and like I say, it gives you a little bit of background of the ecology since we've lived here, I guess.

Interviewer: Well, the lily pads leaving is a very interesting discussion.

Bob Moate: It. And I certainly don't know – I don't know why they came and proliferated as fast as they did. It was just over a case of maybe two-three years from a couple of patches here or there, to where it was pretty solid. It's not believable to look out there now and not see one.

Interviewer: And this was pre-dam when the lily pads were –?

Bob Moate: Yes. Yea.

Interviewer: Yeah. So that's likely a major influence on them.

Bob Moate: I think maybe it was because I think they were probably pretty sensitive to the water level, I would think.

Interviewer: Yeah. Water level and temperature...

Bob Moate: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: So with lily pads, I would guess you would probably also had turtles and other amphibians, and little fish that –?

Bob Moate: Which we don't have now.

Interviewer: Right.

Bob Moate: We had turtles and – in fact when our girls were small, they used to go along here with a sieve and catch little baby bullheads. And they had a little pond up here, and they'd put them in, and then they'd take them out and put them back in the lake, you know. [Laughter]. But now we haven't seen baby bullheads along here for 20 years probably. There was I think a lot more fish close in here when we had the lily pads than we have now. Although they still catch fish.

Interviewer: What other, say, wildlife or bird changes have you seen along the way?

Bob Moate: Well, there has been quite a few changes, and of course one was we never had any problems with deer, of course, when we first moved out here. I could plant a garden and never get it touched. Now, it's hard to keep them out.

Interviewer: Yeah, I saw one just over here about five minutes ago.

Bob Moate: Yeah. I do my best to keep them out, but it doesn't do it. When they get really hungry or thirsty in the fall, then they come in anyway. And of course, we've got a few turkeys now, which we

never had years back. Quail also – we get quail in yard some, which we never used to get...and mourning doves. And the mourning doves have been staying all winter.

I got feeling sorry for them so we started feeding them. [Laughter]. And of course that keeps them here then. However, they seem to survive the winter or they've been here for the last two winters, and the quail too some. But I think as far as bird life, I think we have probably more ducks than we used to have – that's just kind of off the top of my head. But it seemed like we have a lot of ducks now. And of course we have geese, which we never used to have.

Interviewer: That's something that's happening all across the U.S.

Bob Moate: Yeah. So I guess, [laughter], probably a lot of other states as well as Idaho, I guess. But at any rate, on small birds, songbirds, I don't know we've always had a lot and we still have a lot. The ospreys, we have probably more than we've ever had. And we do have at least one pair of bald eagles that nest up here at the edge of the lake.

And that's been recent years because we spent, gosh, I would say just guess the first 20 years, I don't think we ever seen a bald eagle here, and not very many offspring. So they both proliferated, but then I know that has happened on [inaudible] too. And the last two years, and I think that's probably just my reading through, but we have seen a few golden eagles, which this area really isn't an area that they would want to spend a lot of time. That's why I think they are just migrating through.

But I've seen the most interesting thing here about two weeks ago, and that was two golden eagles trying to catch a duck out here in the bay. They made about six or eight passes, both eagles, and it was a hen goldeneye, so it would dive – every time they got within three or four feet, it would dive and they wouldn't get it.

And we thought, well, they're just gonna wear it out until it can't dive very much, and then they'll get it. But eventually it flew and it got away apparently...a very interesting thing though. I've never seen it happen before.

Interviewer: Yep. Other people were telling me that prior to the eagles moving in, there was a heron rookery on the lake.

Bob Moate: Yes. And, there again, when we first moved out, we were seeing very few, and then when they had the rookery down at the foot of the lake there, we seen them almost every day. And there again, now they've tapered down again, not near as many last year again.

Interviewer: Do you see much potential for more residential development around the lake?

Bob Moate: Well, definitely you know up here on the McCann's flat, they access that from the Fernan new road, and, yeah, they're building, I think, one or two houses up there now. And that's all platted off. I don't remember how many – it seemed like they had that platted off for about 12 or so houses up there, and I think – gosh, I went up there recently. It was probably four or five now ago.

Interviewer: Let's see here, a couple of your sons live up the hill here. Is that right?

Bob Moate: Yes. Yeah, they live in part of my dad's original property up here – straight up the hill actually.

Interviewer: It's nice to have family close.

Bob Moate: Yeah, it is nice. Yeah. When I was young, I could zoom up there in about five minutes, but I can't do that anymore.

Interviewer: [Laughter].

Bob Moate: It takes about ten minutes to drive around.

Interviewer: [Laughter]. Well, I'm not sure I have any more questions to ask. What am I not asking that I should be, Bob? What else would you like to tell me about what's happening here at the lake?

Bob Moate: Well, I guess I've got it pretty well covered. Like I say, I certainly would like to see the lake cleared up if possible. I know it's gonna

be a difficult job, and maybe impossible. I don't know.
[Laughter]. But maybe you could give me your thoughts on what
you think might improve it.

Interviewer: I'll be glad to, but let me turn the recorder off.

[End of audio]