

Interviewer: It's March 28th, and I'm here with Bonnie Douglas to talk about issues for Fernan Lake. This is Mark Solomon. So how long have you lived here?

Bonnie Douglas: I've lived here since 1986, and my husband has lived here since 1956.

Interviewer: Whoa.

Bonnie Douglas: He had years away, you know, for schooling and residence.

Interviewer: What brought him to live here and then you to live here?

Bonnie Douglas: His parents built the house in 1956.

Interviewer: So he was raised here?

Bonnie Douglas: Yeah, it was the first house in the village.

Interviewer: So that's after it had been plotted as a village. I know it was the first house built here in the village.

Bonnie Douglas: Yeah. That's my understanding.

Interviewer: Wow. And you moved here because you married him and –?

Bonnie Douglas: Yeah. His mother passed away in 1986 so then we took possession of the house.

Interviewer: Good. What do you most value about living here?

Bonnie Douglas: The views. [Laughter]. Yep. Mm-hmm. I reckon when we first moved in, this used to be where the house ended. And there was a cement patio exactly here, and then once of those corrugated plastic roofs. And all you saw was the water. You didn't see any

of the view. So the first thing we did was remodeled and opened up to the view so we could see the hillsides all around.

Interviewer: Other than appreciating the view, how do you use the lake?

Bonnie Douglas: Well, we used to do more fishing. *[Laughter]*. When my kids were young, we used to fish a lot. And now that we're older, we don't fish as much. But we use it year-round. And when the kids were young, it was really nice because in the winter, the lake froze and it was like your backyard just went for miles. *[Laughter]*. We used to walk down and visit neighbors down the lake. So pretty neat that's a lake that freezes over pretty regularly.

Interviewer: Do you boat on the lake?

Bonnie Douglas: We had only a rowboat and a little paddleboat. We had no motorboat. So weird – but I think the only like ____ family doesn't have a motorboat.

Interviewer: Other than issues of growing older, how has your use of the lake been changing?

Bonnie Douglas: Well, for me, personally, I'm in like a state of flux right now because I'm gonna be doing water testing through the Master Water Steward Program. So I'm interested in the lake quality, you know, as a high thing on my list, you know, because I want the lake to be here for my children to inherit this house. I figure they deserve to have the lake instead of a meadow. *[Laughter]*. So that's some – my particular thing is I'm more into the lake quality stuff. My husband is just looking forward to retiring and having more time to spend.

Interviewer: What does your husband do?

Bonnie Douglas: He's a podiatrist. I was hoping he'd be here but he hasn't shown up. I was trying for 4:00 originally, so we moved it up and...

Interviewer: How have you seen – you know, talking about lake water quality, what changes have you seen in the water quality?

Bonnie Douglas: Well, to me, it seems like the blue-green algae thing is really ramped up the last few years more than in the past. I don't – I mean for us, we haven't really seen it that much over the years just until the last few years. And so that's been a concern, you know.

Interviewer: Do you have any hunches as to why it's –?

Bonnie Douglas: I believe it has been aggravated by the – when did the road construction. And see all those bare spots over there?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Bonnie Douglas: They sprayed all that with hydroseeding when they finished in the winter. I mean there was no way it was going to grow, but where do you think all that went with all the nutrients that were attached to those little seeds. I just fully believe that some of the decisions they made compromised the – or contributed to the lake, the blooms of the lake.

Interviewer: So how often do you see the blooms now, or how have the blooms changed?

Bonnie Douglas: Well, last year, it was twice...twice in one year, and it was a long period of time. It seemed like it was several weeks in July, and then again in the fall.

Interviewer: Prior to the road construction, did you see the blooms?

Bonnie Douglas: We never noticed them by our dock. I mean all the times when I had little kids, I never noticed it, but I don't remember a bloom when my kids were growing up. So I mean there might have been, but – and it doesn't always sit in our area here because we get a lot of flow through here with – you know, the wind blow this way during the day. And then at night, the wind blows this way. So I'm sure that some other places, it gets stuck. But here, it seems to move through, and I've never noticed it until the last few years by the dock.

Interviewer: *Is it noticeable outside of the lake, itself? Some people have talked about smelling it.*

Bonnie Douglas: I mean I don't know. I mean I don't think – that isn't the primary thing I remember, but other people are more sensitive to smells. I mean I remember going to **callos** sites, and I thought it would be really bad, but I didn't – the ammonia thing didn't bother me. And other people wouldn't leave the bus, so *[laughter]*.

Interviewer: *[Laughter].*

Bonnie Douglas: So I don't think my smeller is maybe tuned into to some of that stuff. But I do worry that none of the advisories really talked about – like we irrigate from the lake, and so we're aerating it through the air. I don't know, you know. *[Laughter]*. We do it at night. We do it at night, so I mean people aren't around, but we certainly could not irrigate for three weeks. That's something that I feel is a – in the advisories, they don't really talk about that.

Interviewer: *Yeah.*

Bonnie Douglas: And we have friends that live up on Fernan Hill, and they, I'm pretty sure, use the water for showering the lake water – for showering and stuff, the way they're doing – aerating it. I mean so some of those things aren't really covered – I mean it talks about swimming in it and stuff, but I mean people may be exposed to it in other ways, or maybe not. I don't know how far down it goes. If their intake is low enough, maybe it's not a factor.

Interviewer: *That's probably true because the algae are in the upper areas where it can have access to something.*

Bonnie Douglas: Yeah. It'll be interesting to see who all – I don't know who all had water rights.

Interviewer: **Towards** *diversion.*

Bonnie Douglas: But they've been recently – the water rights have all been – whatever it is.

Interviewer: Adjudicated.

Bonnie Douglas: Adjudicated.

Interviewer: Or being adjudicated.

Bonnie Douglas: Yeah. Or over adjudicated. [Laughter].

Interviewer: Who, in your view, is taking responsibility for taking action on the algae blooms?

Bonnie Douglas: Well, the press releases seem to come from Panhandle Health and Department of Environmental Quality. So probably they're heading it up, but I don't see that – I mean I've already – Senske has already come out through the neighborhood and done all my neighbor's lawns, you know. Now, did they all tell them they want the phosphorus? I don't know. But it's already been done. That's my understanding.

I mean we don't pay to have our lawn maintained, but a lot of people in this neighborhood do. So that kind of worries me that, you know, they've already set in motion. [Laughter]. And what it seems like happens sometimes is we get a big rain, and that moves – starts moving things. And then that's – like after a big rain is when we notice the algae bloom, the first one in July – the end of June beginning of July whenever – I know it was around the fourth. [Laughter].

Interviewer: Yeah, it was the end of June; I remember it.

Bonnie Douglas: Yeah.

Interviewer: Well, if Panhandle Health and IDEQ are taking the lead, are there others that should be engaged in, you know, the –?

Bonnie Douglas: Well, for information purposes, I think there should be more – especially people who are using the water, you know, not just recreators but –. And I don't know what kind of signage they're putting down by the public docks or anything, but I don't know how they're informing people other than the news releases. I just

don't remember if we got a letter from the village or not about it. We might have. They usually – a lot of times they'll drop a letter off. We don't have that many houses.

Interviewer: Yeah. I don't know about that. So how do you get your information on the lake water quality then?

Bonnie Douglas: Well, for me, it's the newspaper, [laughter], primarily. It probably should come from the village, I would think.

Interviewer: Why the village?

Bonnie Douglas: Well, because they have the list of all the contact people. They have a contact list for all the people that live on the lake. You know, I mean there is a lot of – the general public that uses the lake too, but if we're irrigating with that water and spraying it up in the air, [laughter], with our windows open, you know, that may not be the coolest thing to do be doing. [Laughter]. So I don't know, but...

Interviewer: Out of curiosity, do you know how deep from the lake you pull your water when your [inaudible]?

Bonnie Douglas: Oh, it's probably only – I would say it's about at the end of the dock. It's like maybe 25 feet from the shore.

Interviewer: So maybe eight foot?

Bonnie Douglas: I think eight-ten feet. Yeah. Not real deep. It looks like it floats on the surface. I mean but...you know, I really don't know.

Interviewer: Well, it's a plant, so it wants the sun so it's gonna be as close to the surface as it can get.

Bonnie Douglas: But whether or not there is lesser concentrations that happen, I really don't know.

Interviewer: I will not pretend to be a geoscientist, so...

Bonnie Douglas: Yeah, me neither. So I mean it could be that the water is not – that it's just the surface that it is. I don't really understand it yet.

Interviewer: So how would you say that the algae blooms have affected your enjoyment of –?

Bonnie Douglas: Well, we didn't have people over for holiday parties for the 4th of July or anything, which normally the lake would be a place for a holiday party. But it was not – and we have friends that bring their boat. They water-ski sometimes. So I mean there was a bunch of weeks where we didn't have people over to do those kinds of things that we do.

Interviewer: If the unthinkable were to happen and the problem continued to get worse, how would you –?

Bonnie Douglas: I would be really, really upset, [laughter], because to me, it devalues the property. It devalues having a lakefront property on polluted kind of waters is what the implication would be. So I think that the house values would suffer.

Interviewer: Would that personally affect you if you were...?

Bonnie Douglas: Yeah, because we pay higher taxes to be on waterfront, you know, and the reason you pay it is...

Interviewer: Yeah, but the way it works is it's based on market value, and if everybody's value market decreased because the value of the – the access of the lake went down, it would...

Bonnie Douglas: Yeah. Well, anyway, I think it is a concern. I mean it is – we have neighbors who have been trying to sell their house for a long time and it hasn't sold. But you just don't know how much influence it would have. I mean not that we want to sell, but it's still a major asset.

Interviewer: Yep. That is true. You're in the village, so you don't have marketable timber on your property...

Bonnie Douglas: Nope. No.

Interviewer: So that's a portion of the discussion we don't have to have, and you don't have further sub dividable lots.

Bonnie Douglas: Right.

Interviewer: That's another portion of the discussion we don't have to have.

Bonnie Douglas: I think we have the biggest – we have 165-feet of lake frontage, and there is like an extra half lot next to us, and that's attached to our property, but it's not buildable. So we do have, I think, one of the bigger lots in the village. Most of them, I think, are 100 feet or less.

Interviewer: Do you see development happening in your viewscape? Is that something that's gonna happen in the future?

Bonnie Douglas: Nope. Because they passed the hillside ordinance, and the hillside ordinance, it's just the – there are some spots down across from where the public dock is that were scheduled for development, and then one of the principal parties passed away, and nothing has gone forward with it. So I think – I don't know if it will happen or not. But then they donated – the people who were from the village bought the land and then they donated a big chunk of it to the city of Coeur d'Alene. There is gonna be a walking trail...

Interviewer: I've been reading about that.

Bonnie Douglas: ...up near where the – well, it used to be the heron rookery. Now there is an eagle that hangs around there, [laughter], so I don't know. I don't know where his nest is, but he's taken care of...

Interviewer: Taking care of the herons...yeah.

Bonnie Douglas: And I don't know where the herons have moved to, but you used to hear the herons. It would sound like babies crying. It was the baby herons making these really funny noises. Somebody's baby

is crying. Then finally we figured out it was the herons. But it's kind of nice to have the eagle. We enjoy it. And osprey.

And then this time of year, we get all the migrating birds, the diving birds, and the _____ and all that. So it's a great place for watching that. And then the geese and the ducks all bring their babies. So sometimes we'll have eight geese families with little babies, you know, all over the whole lawn. They love it.

Interviewer: Would your children love to move here someday?

Bonnie Douglas: I don't know. I think they would, but they're far away pretty much now. But who knows? They may just – if the house is worth enough money, they may [*laughter*] stay where they are, you know, because they're established elsewhere. But it's hard here because our property taxes are \$4,000.00 a year, so I mean we even wonder in our old age when we're finally retired, are we going to be able to afford to live here? I mean because that's \$400.00 a month just for your taxes.

So I don't know. I mean who knows what their circumstances will be, but we had our kids late in life, so they'll be – my youngest is 25 and I'm 65. So it's – the time – I don't know that they would be able to afford to live here. And the other one is in New Hampshire, and that's where his family is at, so what are the chances? I don't know. So we don't know what's gonna happen with that. But I would like – my husband would like to keep it in the family. It's that legacy, you know.

Interviewer: Other than blue-green algae blooms, are there other things that are harming the lake or are threats to the lake?

Bonnie Douglas: Oh yeah, well, we're real worried about the milfoil and the quagga mussels and all that stuff.

Interviewer: Is milfoil in the lake?

Bonnie Douglas: No, not to my knowledge. I don't think so. And they're doing those inspections so hopefully we're – you know. And they have warning signs about that down there by the boat launch. But that would be horrible here. I mean Hayden has it. And if people are bring their boats from Hayden to, you know, and then putting them

in here. I mean it is a possibility that could be bye-bye swimming. [Laughter]. I mean that would not be good. It's too shallow – it's a shallow lake too.

Interviewer: So as a residential landowner here, what's your interaction or relationship with the general recreationalist that uses the lake?

Bonnie Douglas: Well, some of them we like, and some of them we don't like. I mean [laughter] we've got a lot of canoers and kayakers, and they bring people – you know, like a group of them will come down. Now, they have – what are those other boards that you stand on?

Interviewer: Paddleboards.

Bonnie Douglas: And so there is a lot of people that use the lake that are not motorized, but then you have these jet boats and they come in and go down and they make big waves. They go down way to the other end...

Interviewer: Come back and pull their boat out? It's...

Bonnie Douglas: Whatever. So they're going back and forth. So that can be a problem, but we usually don't have much motorboat traffic until the weekends. And then the mornings, you're more likely to have the fishermen. And most of them aren't speeding around; they're just trolling so they're not as much of a nuance. But on the weekends, you get the, you know, more recreational use because everybody is entertaining on the lake and stuff, so there is a lot more going on.

Interviewer: Well, let me ask you the question then: Whom else should I talk with?

Bonnie Douglas: Bob Moate. I know Sue Andres told me she mentioned him. But I think they use the lake water for showering, and then they bring up drinking water in big container things. They live – their parents are right down on the lake, and then their family owns the property up – and both of the sons live up above, but I'm not sure that they both – I'm pretty sure that Bob uses some – uses lake water.

Interviewer: Anybody that way?

Bonnie Douglas: I don't really know anybody on that side. The only other person that – you know, some of the other people were at that meeting that we had at the school, you know, like the **Nemics** and **Pre-Nemics** and some of the other neighbors. The next-door neighbors, she's pretty interested in it, and she worked hard to get the hillside ordinance passed, and, you know, that. But I mean I don't know – other than the Moate family, and there is, like I said, the one – the parents are down on the lake, and then there is two sons and their house is right up above it.

Interviewer: Yeah, Susan gave me their names.

Bonnie Douglas: Do you have the phone number with the contact?

Interviewer: Uh...yes, I think Bill just gave it to me.

Bonnie Douglas: Oh, okay.

Interviewer: Actually, he didn't give me their phone number.

Bonnie Douglas: I think it's – [looks up phone number]. Bob Moate Sr. is the one down on the lake, and they're like in their eighties, and then the boys are up above them. [Looks up number]. Yeah. 667-3871. That's Bob Jr. who is up on the hill. And then on the lake is – if you want the parents' number, I can give you that too.

Interviewer: Sure.

Bonnie Douglas: They're on the lake. It's 664-9438.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you. What am I not asking that I should be? What other things would you like to share regarding the lake?

Bonnie Douglas: Well, I think – I mean I'm kind of irritated about the Senske – whatever it's called. They come and knock on my door and say, "Well, the neighbors thought maybe you would like to have your

lawn treated because you have clover.” And I just – because we don’t do any of that, the treatment stuff. I said, well, the neighbor that I know up on the hill, Fernan Hill, she had beehives and they love the clover. *[Laughter]*.

So I’m just like I don’t wanna – but there are sort of social pressures and there are lots of restrictions being in the village. You can’t have a fence taller than 42 inches, so the deer – you can’t grow anything. It’s like one of my biggest frustrations is I can’t grow zucchini or whatever that everybody else does because the deer eat everything, you know.

So there is a lot of social pressure here to keep your lawn nice and not to have – you know. So I don’t know, there is just something about that that I think is gonna – you know. I find it kind of offensive that people would – I mean I don’t know that they send the people over. Another time, someone came and said, “Oh, you have spiders around the outside of your house.” I said, yeah, I know. They eat the mosquitoes. *[Laughter]*. “Well, they can get in the house,” and all this stuff.

I mean it’s like all these service people that can afford to pay for, we can’t afford to pay for all that stuff. I mean but there is like this social pressure, you know, not to have a dandelion or a – here is husband.

Interviewer: Is it like by covenant or by social pressure?

Bonnie Douglas: I think it’s – well, there is social pressure. Hi. This is Mark.

Ron Douglas: Hi Mark.

Bonnie Douglas: Mark had to come earlier because of his conflicts.

Ron Douglas: Oh, hi. Hi. Ron Douglas. Glad to meet you. A pleasure.

Bonnie Douglas: He’s the native.

Ron Douglas: I’m the native. *[Laughter]*. Yeah.

Bonnie Douglas: But anyway, I do think there is sort of – you know, just to have a perfect lawn, and some suburban competition thing that goes on in other places too. I’m sure this isn’t the only place. But, anyway, we don’t pay to treat any of the – we’re not gonna have the perfect lawn. *[Laughter]*. We’re gonna have spiders outside. *[Laughter]*.

And we don't mind if the deer hang out by our house, we just don't – we wish we could have a taller fence in part of the yard so we can at least have a garden.

Ron Douglas: Yeah, when I grew up here it was a rare occurrence to see any deer, you know. The neighbors would call each other and say [*speaks excitedly*], "Oh, look, there's a deer." Now, it's like [*speaks calmly*], "Look there's a deer."

Interviewer: [Laughter].

Bonnie Douglas: [*Laughter*].

Ron Douglas: He's eating everything.

Bonnie Douglas: They used to have no leash law. They didn't really – when your mother...

Ron Douglas: Oh yeah, the dog ran all over.

Bonnie Douglas: The dogs ran over and they begged for biscuits at the neighbor's house.

Ron Douglas: Yeah. And then the deer would probably try to come, but then the dogs would scare them off, obviously.

Bonnie Douglas: But now we're much more regulated. So if you have your dog running loose, then you pretty much – it gets picked up by the pound.

Ron Douglas: Did you show him pictures?

Bonnie Douglas: No.

Interviewer: Not yet.

Bonnie Douglas: I have some of them to Marie.

Interviewer: I'm gonna turn these off. At the end of formal interview...

Bonnie Douglas: I said there is social pressure to have a perfect lawn.

Ron Douglas: Oh. Yes, there is.

Bonnie Douglas: Would you agree? *[Laughter]*.

Interviewer: But hey, we get all the geese in...

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