

Craters of the Moon National Monument & Preserve

Interview with James Morris

Superintendent 1995-2005 (abridged version)

By Lenard Ramacher
3/18/2013

Interview with James Morris

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Lenard Ramacher: It is Monday, March 18, 2013. This is Lennie Ramacher, and we're here at the home of Jim Morris. Jim, would you like to go ahead and introduce yourself?

James Morris: Jim Morris.

LR: What was the last title you held with park service?

JM: Superintendent of Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve.

LR: Okay. Could you talk briefly about how you came to work for the National Park Service?

JM: I was working in Alaska at the time for the agency called the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, and I was primarily responsible for doing studies of rivers in Alaska. And for some reason at the Washington level they decided to transfer that program from the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service over to the National Park Service. So I was transferred over to the National Park Service, and that would have been about 1982.

LR: Can you briefly give a summary of some of the different positions you held with the park service prior to coming to Craters of the Moon.

JM: Well, like I say, I was in Alaska, I worked for the National Park Service for about 2 years then I decided two things: one, if I was going to be with the National Park Service I did not want to be in the regional office, I wanted to be out in the field; and, number two, with a young family I felt we had lived in Alaska long enough and it was time to give them a new experience. And so I applied to a number of parks and was hired at John Day Fossil Beds as the Chief of Interpretation. I held that position for probably two months, and they did what they used to call in those days an operation evaluation. And it was determined that I should be made the Chief Ranger and be put in charge of all the ranger and resource activities and other activities. And I stayed there as Chief Ranger for 11 years, serving two stints as the superintendent there...once for 3 months and once for about 9 months. And, decided that I was getting a little bit old, a little long in the tooth, and didn't want to be law enforcement ranger too many more years, and decided that the mystique of being a superintendent had worn off because of my acting assignments, and decided to apply for a superintendency, and applied for the one at Craters of the Moon, and got it.

LR: Okay. In Alaska I understand you were scouting some of the parks that had been established there by Carter in 1980. Is that correct?

JM: Well, actually I was up there before that time. At that time Congress had a number of rivers that Congress had authorized for study [to] determine their eligibility for National Wild and Scenic River status and that was my primary job. Basically conducting those studies, and completing the reports, Environmental Impact Statements, and submitting them to Congress for consideration.

LR: And so when you came to Craters of the Moon that was 1995, correct?

JM: Yes, my job here started in February 1995.

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LR: And then you retired in June of 2005?

JM: Yes.

LR: So it's that part, that last 10 years of your career with the park service at Craters of the Moon that we want to focus on today, particularly as it relates to the expansion there. Could you talk a little bit about the state of discussions about the expansion of the monument. They'd been around for some time, but what was the sense when you arrived there?

JM: Well, it's been quite a few years ago, so my memory may not be entirely clear, but...as I recall, when I was offered the position of superintendent here I was told by Deputy Regional Director Bill Walters that one of the things that they wanted me to focus on was expanding the monument. That some groundwork had been laid by my predecessor, Jon Jarvis, but nothing had come of that. And they wanted it to be pushed ahead. So one of the things I focused on when I arrived here was doing a lot of review of the materials that Jon had left. And I was a little amiss that there was a basically, there wasn't a lot of support for the proposal. Jon apparently had gone back to Washington and spoke with then-Congressman Michael Crapo, and basically got a...I wouldn't say it a negative reaction, but not a endorsement of the proposal. Jon had had some maps prepared which showed the expansion including all of the lava flows south of Craters – the existing Craters monument and also the Wapi Flow...But there was very little support from local people, in fact there was none, and there was actually some startling letters from the local management of the Bureau of Land Management that were highly critical, and—
[6:22]

LR: Those letters were from Bureau of—

JM: From the Bureau of Land Management. From the district manager...You might want to look those up. They were pretty...negative. So...I think what I wanted to focus on was building some local support. And with that in mind I really worked a lot with the three, what later became known as field office managers of Shoshone, Burley, and Idaho Falls. I don't know if you want me to go into any greater depth than that or not...

LR: I think before we get there, there were a couple of other things I wanted to get to. What were some of the other management issues that Craters of the Moon faced at the time you arrived?

JM: We had some personnel issues, but I don't think I need to get into those that had to be resolved. ...The park was at that time working out of a Mission-66 visitor center slash headquarters building and staff was very much crammed into that building. Plus, the building really wasn't functioning very well for our visitors. For example the exhibits, although historically kind of interesting were very antiquated, and didn't adequately tell the story of Craters of the Moon, why it was significant, what the importance of the park was, or explain the resources very well to the visitors at all. And, quite frankly, the way it was laid out...I remember visiting the park with my family several years earlier, walked in the visitor center, looked around the book sale area and asked if they had a museum.

LR: [Chuckle].

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JM: 'Cause I didn't even see the museum because it was so dark back there. The entrance into the museum was not welcoming. I mean, that was just an anecdotal observation I had. So the visitor center needed to be upgraded and something done about expanding it. The General Management Plan which I, of course, reviewed called for the construction of a new visitor center to be located over [in] what we call the "boneyard" over in that vicinity, and turning the existing building over to just a headquarters building. And I thought that was a little...for the amount of visitation the park received, and the likelihood of funding – I thought that seemed to be impractical. And I actually called Jon Jarvis, who was up in Alaska at the time...since he'd signed off on the General Management [Plan] – I asked. I really don't believe a superintendent should come in and change things, particularly in the General Management Plan. But, when I spoke with him, I found he shared the same opinion: That it was impractical and perhaps even unnecessary. So I started looking at what we might do, might be more in the realm of possibility.

LR: It does seem like expansion was a charge given by the regional office, when you came in. Was it fair to say—

JM: I would say informally. Not officially...

LR: Okay.

JM: But informally.

LR: Okay...What other role did the regional office supply in terms of the expansion effort? What role did they play?

JM: Well, for the first year or two I was primarily just trying to educate myself on the expansion and what the options might be, building a relationship with Bureau of Land Management, primarily. But we had a change in regional directors: John Reynolds came in from Washington, DC as our new regional director. And...I wasn't real certain what level of support I had from the regional office...So I prepared a position paper and circulated it, and also invited the NPS regional director, the state director of Bureau of Land Management, the district manager from BLM, and the three resource managers from BLM to join me on a field inspection of the monument. Kind of a social gathering, but also we toured the area. And before they left the area I convened a meeting in the morning and basically put it to them – primarily the regional director and the state director of BLM – where they stood. Did they support expansion? Did they – guess I was basically asking them 'Do you want to keep pursuing this? Do you want me to cool my jets?' Just, come on, let's be candid about this. And the feedback I got from them was supportive to the extent: 'yeah, just a fire lit under this, and um, we'll just see how the politics play out.' I don't think they expressed it in that many words, but there was a change coming in administrations, and I just think 'hey maybe the opportunity would present itself' and when it did let's be prepared for it.

LR: Approximately what year was that?

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JM: You'd have to look back in the files. I think if I had to guess it would have been probably about 1998 [12:48]...Because I think if it'd been prior to 1999, which is the year we celebrated the 75th anniversary, and my attentions were kind of focused on other things that year. My guess it was 1998.

LR: It sounds like you had probably been at the monument for a couple years—?

JM: Been there a couple years, two maybe three years....

LR: What other interactions did the monument have with its neighbors—particularly with BLM. I think the monument was almost entirely bordered by BLM at that time.

JM: Well, yeah. All the lands we were looking at were lands administered by the BLM, with a few exceptions of private lands. The relationships were good...I would say as I think back. I went on tours of the lands with each of the BLM Field Office Managers – Idaho Falls, Burley, and Shoshone. I may have been more familiar with some of these resources than the BLM managers.

LR: [Laughs].

JM: And so we got interested from the standpoint of 'Hey, we need to do something. We need to do better management of these lands.' And as a result they kicked in some money to clean up the area around King's Bowl, for example. But not supportive of any park expansion. The Burley Field Office Manager—at the time, Tom Dyer was his name, he went on to become state director of BLM several years later—he was very supportive. And I don't remember a lot of support from the area manager—initial area manager—at Shoshone. But when Bill Baker came in, he kind of got on the bandwagon with being very—in fact, quite supportive. So two out of three were supportive. One was not, I would say. But, he was interested in improving the condition of some of the resources they had there, particularly the area around King's Bowl.

LR: That was one question I had: Craters of the Moon is kind of unusual in that it's a co-managed monument today. Was that decision to co-manage something that organically grew out of your work with them, or was that something that came from other quarters?

JM: Primarily out of other quarters.

[Break at 15:26]

JM: I'd say that there's two things going on [regarding co-management]. One, I made it very clear in my discussions with my supervisor – the regional director and the deputy regional director – and in the briefing papers I prepared that my focus was on protection for the area known as the Great Rift. It wasn't on National Park Service administration of the area. I did that very purposefully because I felt there was a role for Bureau of Land Management and I felt, based upon the history there, if I just kept "Hey, let's make this a national park area administration" I think it would have gotten little or no support from the Bureau of Land Management. I mean, yes, I would rather have seen the Park Service administer most of those lands, but let's focus on how we can best assure the protection of the lands within the area known as the Great Rift. And then I noticed public statements by the new Secretary of

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the Interior, Bruce Babbitt, and I found it very interesting when I read some of his speeches that he was promoting this concept of protecting nationally significant lands, administered by the Bureau of Land Management. And they already administered—I think ‘areas of environmental concern.’ Which basically [meant] management oversight of an area; no legal protection, so to speak. But he was already talking about National Conservation, what do call them? NC—National Conservation Lands...

LR: National Landscape Conservation System?

JM: Yeah, National Landscape Conservation areas. I don’t know if the President had actually set aside any areas in that category or not yet. But, the Secretary was talking about them. And I thought ‘Man – perfect.’ I mean the things he’s saying in his speeches, and what he’s pushing—the Craters of the Moon expansion area, much of the lands fit that category. I had a good relationship with the state director of Bureau of Land Management, Martha Hahn, and I spoke to her about just what was going on within the Bureau of Land Management...kind of got a sense that maybe there was going to be an end-around little bit...

LR: How so?

JM: Well if the park service didn’t move on this, then the Bureau of Land Management was going to move on it and we were gonna be left out. I just felt that the time was right now to push real heavy on it. I can’t remember what kind of tipped me off about thinking this was a really good time, but I called John Reynolds, the regional director, and spoke with him and felt that this was really a time to push with the Secretary’s Office on this. And, he said, coincidentally the Secretary was gonna be in San Francisco in the coming week or two, and if I sent the regional director a briefing paper, he would make an opportunity to talk with the Secretary about it. And he did. And it was shortly after that, I get a call from the Secretary’s Office saying that the Secretary of the Interior was going to visit Craters of the Moon. And we got to host him...That happened, I think that probably would have been the summer of...

LR: Would that have been April?

JM: Yeah, it would have been spring, and...that was in 2000, I think? Maybe it was 1999, but I think it was 2000.

LR: Did he make a couple different trips out there?

JM: [His] initial trip was to see the area and to tour it with members of the media, so we met him at the airport in Arco. And flew with he and members of his staff and members of the media down to Kings Bowl where Dr. Mel Kuntz gave him an excellent briefing on the significance and geology of the area. He came back to Craters of the Moon, toured part of that. Again, met with the public and the media, and did a presentation where he answered questions about what he was thinking. And about what he felt about the area and how it met his vision of protected lands. Then he came back a few months later and we met with primarily the ranching community. He met folks out at...that area that I’m trying to remember, where the aspens are and everything...

LR: Is that Snowdrift Crater?

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JR: Snowdrift Crater, yes.

LR: In Laidlaw Park. [20:45]

JM: In Laidlaw Park. We met with members of the local ranching community and other interested landowners. And then he also held some public meetings in Arco, and—can't remember elsewhere, but I know in Arco, and answered questions about what he was thinking. And later on, he returned a third time. He didn't come to the park though, he went down to Burley or one of those communities. Rupert or Burley, I think it was Burley. And held a public question and answer period with the public down there in terms of what he was thinking to present to the President for the President's consideration. And that all moved fairly fast...

LR: It sounds like it was a fairly open process if he's holding public meetings...

JM: Well, yeah. He's giving the opportunity for people to ask questions and make their views known...and they were interesting public meetings.

LR: [Laughs] Any—

JM: He was very good at answering. The man had been in politics, and the governor, so some of the antagonism that was expressed from primarily the ATV groups, the Blue Ribbon Coalition and such, they were...

LR: Was there a particular instance that stood out in your mind, or a story?

JM: Not really, just they were pretty direct in some of their questions. Some of their questions were not so much questions as just their opportunity to get on the soapbox and make statements. I'm not talking about the leadership of the Blue Ribbon Coalition, but some of the members. But he answered their questions and presented what he felt about the significance and certainly shared with them his belief that this was a very unique area that deserved greater protection. Even though most people couldn't see the threat, he was looking for the long term, not the short term.

LR: I'm glad you brought that up. Craters was expanded around the same time there were a number of expansions at the close of the Clinton administration. Some of those became reviewed later on by the incoming Bush administration, by Congress. How was Craters affected—or was it affected—by that review process?

JM: Well, yeah ...the incoming administration basically communicated by letter, I believe, with the county commissioners of every single county in the country that had suddenly had new national monuments or new conservation areas [established] within their area of influence, Butte County being no different. Butte County's the only one I heard from...The county commissioner chairman actually called me and asked me what he felt the response should be. [Chuckles] In this area, because of the grazing lands being put under the administration of Bureau of Land Management, their only concern, primarily, was the grazing. Hunting was another minor concern, but expressed by some corners, but

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Blaine County was largely supportive from the very beginning; Butte County was kind of neutral; American Falls, what's the...trying to think what county that is. Is that Minidoka County?

LR: Might be Power County?

JM: Power County. Thank you, you're right. They were kind of supportive, from the very beginning. Didn't hear much at all from Lincoln County; and...

LR: I think Minidoka's the—

JM: Minidoka—didn't hear much from them either way.

LR: At one point you did have to testify before Congress. Was that as a result of this or did that come later?

JM: No, that was a result. Senator [Larry] Craig, primarily and a little bit of Congresswoman [Helen] Chenoweth were raising some noise about the fact that they felt this was being done without adequate public input and they felt if there was any expansion of Craters of the Moon it should be done through congressional action instead of presidential action. So Senator Craig held a field hearing. He was on one of the committees that has oversight on public lands. He held what's called a field hearing – it's called a field hearing 'cause they hold it outside of Washington, D.C – down in Twin Falls. And the Secretary of the Interior was petitioned to come and present. The Secretary turned it down and it was passed down to the director of the park service, down to the regional director, down to the poor superintendent of Craters of the Moon.

LR: [Laughs].

JM: And of course, when you testify before Congress in any capacity you gotta have your ducks in order which meant that you had to have a briefing paper which I drafted and then worked on with staff back in Washington, we fine-tuned it a little bit. That's basically what I presented [at the hearing]. It was the testimony of the Secretary of the Interior by myself. And then I answered questions. And, Helen Chenoweth, the Congressman [sic] from [Idaho Congressional] District 1 also appeared, which was surprising 'cause that wasn't her, her committee. But, she liked showboating...

LR: [Laughs]. Was it just a day of questioning? [27:27]

JM: It was presenting the Secretary's position paper orally, answering questions. Some of which were presented to me. Some were presented to the Bureau of Land Management represented by the field office manager from Shoshone, Bill Baker. And then it was turned open to questions from the audience. Or, more like statements from the audience. The Senator was there to hear input from the public, primarily. So, there was opportunity for members of various interest groups to present their position on the expansion.

LR: Were there many groups there?

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JM: Oh, oh yeah. There were many environmental groups; of course, the Blue Ribbon Coalition, and then individuals as well. It was a pretty large audience, as I recall.

LR: Do you recall it being fairly balanced in terms of pro and against?

JM: Yeah, I think it was.

LR: Okay, that's great. We've talked a bit about working with the BLM and neighbors but I also want to talk to you about working with some of those counties, relations with the counties before versus after the expansion. Before it would have been really Butte County, I assume. Did you have much interaction with Butte County prior to the expansion?

JM: Oh yeah, yes.

LR: In what form?

JM: I fairly routinely went to the county commissioner meetings to update 'em on status of ongoing[sic] in the park, whether it be road construction, the visitor center, where we stood with that, just various things. Basically, make excuses to go to them, and stay on their agenda. Not so much with Blaine County. I can't remember if I ever went to any of their commissioner meetings prior to the expansion. It wasn't so much prior to the proclamation but after the proclamation when we were developing the General Management Plan, [I started] regularly going to all five counties presenting and attending their regular meetings.

[30:12 min.]

LR: How were relations with the county commissions?

JM: They were very good, I thought. Very good, very cordial at Power County. I think very cordial in Blaine County, very cordial in Butte County. Lincoln County never responded to any of my inquiries to come and speak to them. They basically weren't interested. And I could probably say the same of Minidoka County. It wasn't on their radar.

LR: Dealing with something that was somewhat volatile politically, at least for some of the congressional delegation, were there any experiences from earlier in your career that [you] kind of looked to for guidance in terms of handling the public or members of Congress or anything like that?

JM: No, I think—well, sure. My years in Alaska I was quite frequently meeting with village leaders and community leaders and briefing them on just what was going on, what we were up to. And then here it was just important to maintain an open line of communication... Maybe it's a little bit going back to law enforcement, too: You never want to be the fellow coming and only meeting with somebody when you had bad news for 'em. You want to establish that relationship and open dialogue so that when you had something less palatable to them or favorable to them, they knew you, they kind of had a dialogue going.

LR: You had that bit of a rapport...

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JM: Yeah.

LR: Turning back to working with the BLM, what were some of the challenges of co-management?

JM: You mean after the—?

LR: After the expansion.

JM: —after the proclamation was signed? ...Hmmp. Well...Let me think about that one for a second...We kind of came about it from two different avenues. Two different agencies, our planning processes were different and they had to be kind of married together as best we could. I think it helped a lot that within the ranks of Bureau of Land Management they decided even though there were three resource areas involved, that the Shoshone office would have the lead on it, would be the primary venue for me to work with. And Bill Baker was the field office manager and we'd had a good working relationship prior, and we just continued that. So that helped a lot....And it also helped that Rick VanderVoet was assigned the lead role and ultimately became the Monument Manager for the Bureau of Land Management. He'd had a long history here working in this area and was a long supporter of conservation of BLM lands. He had that makeup in his DNA already so it made it a lot easier.

LR: Were there any specific challenges in developing a management plan for the monument? [34:13]

JM: ...I would say that the biggest challenge, and it was a thorn in our side the whole time but it was just unavoidable, was during development of the management plan, I and some of my staff felt that...even though the proclamation basically says in so many words that grazing would be—cattle grazing, sheep grazing – would be continued on the BLM-administered lands, that that ought to be examined in the management plan, and in the Environmental Impact Statement. Even if given lip service—'Hey, we considered whether grazing was appropriate or not and decided to dismiss it as an alternative,' and explain why. Or look at, perhaps different levels of grazing on the BLM lands, but I think that at that point in time in history Bureau of Land Management was receiving instructions from a higher level. And it was just off the table, it was not to be even considered. That was frustrating, because it was kind of the big elephant in the room...

LR: So the expansion happened in 2000, and then I believe it was 2002 there was legislation that re-designated a portion of the expansion as a Preserve. Could you talk about that for a minute, what that meant?

JM: We were getting a lot of criticism from the state of Idaho, particularly the Fish and Game Commission. Their interpretation of the proclamation was a little different than ours. The proclamation as I recall says something to the effect that 'nothing in this proclamation shall change the state of Idaho's authority to manage fish and wildlife resources.' And the state took that to mean that they basically managed wildlife on the expanded portions of the monument, and therefore, hunting was allowed. But the proclamation also says that the lands added to the national monument under the administration of the National Park Service will be administered under the same rules and regulations as the existing monument. And very clearly, hunting is prohibited unless specifically authorized by

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Congress. So we had that dilemma. And it got the attention of Congressman Michael Simpson who was our representative of this district. And he proposed legislation to basically open the new national monument lands—including those administered by the park service – to hunting. We worked through our congressional liaison office in Washington, DC, and presented to him a proposal that instead of opening the monument lands to hunting— We had no opposition to hunting. Basically, it was more of a ‘straw man’ issue. [The] likelihood of very much hunting going on within the borders of the expanded lands was very unlikely...

LR: Just because it was so rugged terrain?

JM: So inaccessible. We had no record of much hunting going on down there. It just wasn't that big an issue to us. But, opening national monument lands administered by the park service to hunting was not an area I even wanted to open, I didn't even want to go down that road. So we convinced him that it would be better for all parties to re-designate it a National Preserve where there was a track record— National Preserve lands being open to hunting, oil and gas drilling, and all kinds of different things...He adopted that and proposed legislation and the park service didn't oppose it. Initially they were, but I think we convinced the Washington Office, that...

LR: The Washington Office that was opposed to it?

JM: —opposed to it. But I think we all got on the same bandwagon.

[Break at 38:52]

JM: Let me make that a little more clear. I went back to Washington DC and met with our legislative staff, and we prepared a briefing for the Assistant Secretary of Interior and the Assistant Secretary then went and testified before the Subcommittee on Public Lands, which Mike Simpson was a member of. And did an excellent job of presenting our case, and from that point Simpson's office redrafted the legislation to propose a National Preserve that would be open to hunting, and it pretty much went through Congress without any problem...What was kind of fun about that was that unlike many of the new national monuments and national conservation areas, and etcetera, that had been authorized by presidential proclamation, this actually gave congressional legitimacy, if you will, to the Craters of the Moon National Monument, the entire monument and preserve.

LR: So it was a bit of a vote of confidence then?

JM: Well, I think it gave us a little more... solid standing, because there's still been talk during that period of time when the Bush Administration—there was still talk about whether monuments that had been established by presidential proclamation could be reversed by presidential proclamation. I think that was mostly just talk. But still there was that dialogue, and now we had congressional designation for the Preserve. Which gave us I think a little more solid standing.

LR: Yes. We've talked a lot about some potential sources of antagonism: Blue Ribbon Coalition, and whatnot. What, do you recall, were any of the groups that were really behind the expansion movement and their role?

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JM: The Idaho Conservation League was very active, very supportive... the Wilderness Society lent support...National Parks Conservation Association...I don't recall the Sierra Club being involved at all, but they may have been.

LR: Can you give an example of the kind of support that groups [inaudible]—?

JM: They all prepared statements and made statements of support during the congressional field hearing. During the planning process they were engaged. I think the Wilderness Society particularly was engaged during the planning process. They actually had a field representative participate in many of the public meetings.

LR: Moving beyond the whole incidents around expansion, suddenly at the end of November, 2000, you've got this monument that's now 10 or 11 times the size that it was when you got there in 1995. And it's managed by two agencies. Could you talk a little bit about some of the new priorities that needed to be addressed as a park manager?

JM: First we had to clarify the boundaries, and basically get signage out there that would inform the public that they were now entering a national monument. We wanted to get information out there to the public in terms of the risks and the—well, the expanded part of the monument wasn't like the old monument with a developed road system and trails and staff on hand to lend assistance. It was very, very remote. Very, very primitive road system, a long ways from any type of services. In the summertime a very harsh, dry climate; in the wintertime of course, almost impassable, and at the same time there were traditional activities going on out in the—particularly in the BLM portion of the monument with cattle grazing, and sheep grazing, and such, all associated activities that support that. And we wanted to inform the public about that. And from the get-go make it understood what to expect and how to experience the area best.

LR: So much of the original proclamation had focused on lava flows, lava features. With the proclamation by Clinton in November of 2000, suddenly things like kipukas and sagebrush-steppe are mentioned pretty prominently. Did that cause you to recalibrate your focus of park priorities?

JM: I'd say yes...Certainly the condition of those vegetated areas within the lavas was something we didn't have a lot of information about. What the resources were there, cultural and natural. I think one of my focuses even before the expansion was in getting good baseline information that would allow us to determine over time—and I don't mean over a couple three years, I mean over perhaps decades—how do we know that the resources we've been entrusted with are as well-off now as they were 30 or 40 years ago? And without baseline data it was hard to be able to tell that except anecdotally. When I hired the new Resources [sic] Manager, John Apel, I charged him with that as basically his primary job. Coincidentally, at that time the park service was shifting into that realm of resources management with looking at resources on a regional basis or a territorial basis. I don't mean region from the standpoint park service region, but on, on resource regions...

LR: Almost an ecosystem basis? [45:59]

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JM: —ecosystem basis. And recognizing that particularly the smaller parks, even the larger parks, just didn't have the resources on hand to be able to inventory and monitoring [sic] those things. So, it was kind of nice that about the time I came here as superintendent, and was wanting my resource staff to focus on that thing, the park service globally was entering that type of resource investigation...Then with the expansion of course, it just added to that, that much more land that we had to get a baseline of information on.

LR: So, did that affect choices you make [sic] in terms of staffing or developing new positions. Were any new positions developed as a result?

JM: No, there weren't. And that may have been a large failure on my part. Not to really try and sell the need for park expansion but staff expansion. But I really wasn't—that wasn't my bailiwick...I felt we had to get the general management plan done first. We asked for a very, very modest increase in our base operation once the expansion occurred. It was a tack-on, end-of-the-year budget request, but I felt the park service was not in a position to really go after huge base increases at that time. So I really didn't ask for a huge base increase. We asked for a modest one; I can't remember what the exact numbers were, but mostly staffing insufficiencies we had in the old monument in terms of operation and maintenance of our facilities...interpretation, education. A little bit in resources management. But not a huge increase for the expansion of the monument. That may have been short-sighted. I don't know.

LR: Did Congress come through fairly quickly with that? Or was that something that took a while?

JM: Oh, we saw no significant base increases. Right after the proclamation was signed we had a very small increase. I think it was somewhere in the area of \$50,000 or something like that. I can't remember. But that was mostly just carving it out of the park service budget more or less. Our request to go forward for a base increase from Congress, from the Green Book, was submitted, but those things are ranked and rated and prioritized at the regional level. And the region...wasn't very supportive. And, little anecdotal [sic], I made a mistake there. We had a base increase that was queued up and fairly high up in the regional priorities, like three or four, I think. Which probably meant it would have made the proposal and be in for a base increase. But in talking to John Reynolds, the Regional Director, he said, 'Well, with the expansion, Jim, you really need to revamp that whole request,' which I did. And, it basically fell off the bandwagon. Course, I was...less than charmed by that. I spoke with Patty Neubacher who is one of the associate regional directors and largely responsible for setting up the venue for setting priorities. And she said, 'Well, you changed the name of your request, so that's why it got reconsidered.' And, I thought that kind of an odd way of looking at it.

LR: Hmm.

JM: The title of the budget request before had been, I can't remember, but I thought with the expansion it was good to tie it to the expansion, and that's when it fell off the priority list. Interesting. I can just shake my head about it, because there was just...

LR: No other explanation beyond the change in name?

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JM: I explained to Patty that the reason I did that was at the advice of the regional director. Her comment, anecdotically [sic], was, 'Well, that's what you get for listening to the regional director.' Patty largely ruled the region on those things. And that was my mistake.

LR: Hmm.

JM: [Chuckles]

LR: Stepping back and taking the larger view, what were the main benefits that occurred as a result of the expansion?

JM: In my mind it's the long term assurance of the protection of the lands we know as the Great Rift. Today it's hard to say there are any great threats. There's no oil and gas resources, there's no mineral resources. But, as communities such as Twin Falls grow in population as they're bound to do and are doing, some of the smaller, rural communities south of the monument grow, there's I think going to be a growing demand for landscaping rock, and so on and so forth. And just increasing pressures as we're seeing now with the advent of ATVs, people are just getting out and about in different ways and more readily. Those resources, if not at threat now, would be at threat someday. I think that was [the] primary benefit. Secondly, it's giving greater recognition to this wonderful resource, the Great Rift. I think it's going to shine more light on it. And I think someday there ought to be consideration given to national park status, which would, be deserving of this area.

LR: Any other obstacles that—what are we 13 years removed from expansion?— you see still being dealt with?

JM: ...I've been out of picture for—seven year now, going on eight? I think the two agencies are perhaps still finding it difficult to flesh out what this co-management means. I think it means different things to different individuals. One of the first things that I did after the proclamation was signed—I mean within the first week—we had a arrowhead plaque on the visitor center, outside the visitor center of course, and I had the Bureau of Land Management emblem placed right with it, immediately. And, I thought that was symbolic because I felt that our park service visitor center was now the park service/Bureau of Land Management visitor center. Subtle thing, but I know the district manager [of BLM] noticed it right away and referred to that action many times, saying, 'Hey, the park service stepped up and showed their intent, right off.' And I think set the tone right from the very beginning. I don't know that that spirit of cooperation has been fulfilled to the extent that I would like to see it fulfilled. And...it's hard to say why. I guess it really boils down to individuals. Like I say, Bill Baker and I worked extremely close together, I mean we probably talked on the phone four or five times a week during the entire process. And that's what it took. It wasn't all friendly [chuckles]. I mean there were times we were in each other's face, right up in each other's face over one thing or another...mostly over money.

LR: [Laughs]

JM: Park service was poor. I felt BLM had a lot of resources and I was never hesitant to ask for those resources. As a result of that, we put something together where the two agencies met at least once

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every two months, face-to-face, with staff. Those meetings weren't always really productive. But it forc[ed] us to sit down together and talk about things. The Bureau of Land Management, for example, their fire program administered out of a different office, grazing on the entire monument is not administered out of their [Shoshone] Field Office. It's administered out of their various field offices. They didn't want to change any of that for reasons of relationships, I guess, they had with the permittees... their what we would call 'maintenance' and facility management is administered out of a different office than their monument office. So it's just kind of hard to mesh those things when they come at it from a different perspective. And I don't know if that will ever happen. And maybe that's okay. [56:20]

LR: Any regrets at all about anything you might have handled differently?

JM: [Pause] Yeah, I guess I should have been more aggressive about seeking funding right from the get-go. Eventually the park did get a substantial base increase. I don't think it had so much to do with the expansion. It was just queued up to get that base increase. But...I've always been kind of conservative where it came to funding for government operations. The funding's got to come from somewhere, and it comes from taxpayers, or it comes from other park operations, and I've always been kind of fiscally conservative. Perhaps another manager would have been more aggressive and that would have been good for the park to have some increased funding.

LR: Is there anything else that you wanted to share regarding expansion or your time at Craters of the Moon?

JM: Well, when I accepted the job at Craters of the Moon I was, 'Hmm. Craters of the Moon, big pile of lava rock. Well, I guess I'll try it and see what I think.' And, I came to really quickly appreciate the vast variety of resources the park offers: vegetative, wildlife, geologically, it's just a fantastic resource. And wilderness—it's hard to beat the wilderness experience you could have by just spending some camping evenings out in the expanded area. It's just the wealth of the resources that I really, truly, came to appreciate. And if I had another regret, was not selling that hard enough to the regional office. I guess I underestimated the value of doing that. When I first came to this region, it was the Pacific Northwest Region administered out of Seattle; small area with like 13 parks. Now it's part of the Western [sic] Region administered out of Oakland or San Francisco—they keep going back and forth. People down in the regional office, their focus is largely on California, and perhaps to some degree Hawaii. I don't know why...

LR: [Laughs]

JM: [Chuckles] And I just don't think there is that understanding and appreciation. Why is that important? A lot of decisions are made at the regional office level, in terms of support funding, staffing support and other things, and...I underestimated the value of really selling the region on the Craters of the Moon. I have a little regret there. Should have done a better job in that. But, can't do it all, sometimes.

LR: Well, this is true.

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JM: [Laughs]

LR: I want to thank you for your time today, and agreeing to sit down and record some of your thoughts. Thanks very much.

JM: Thanks, Lennie. [59:55]