

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT ROADS – PART III THE WESTERN OREGON ROADS MAINTENANCE PROGRAM IS TRANSFERRED TO THE BLM

FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH BILL MALTBY, SEPTEMBER 2010

The Western Oregon Roads Maintenance Program had been housed with the Federal Projects Office in Vancouver since 1972. Negotiations between FHWA and the BLM would permanently move the program into the Bureau of Land Management.

The Western Oregon Roads Maintenance Program had been entrusted to the Federal Highway Administration and its predecessor agency, the Bureau of Public Roads, from the 1950's to the early 1970's. These roads provided access to timber lands belonging to the Bureau of Land Management, and **William E. Maltby**, FHWA's chief of the program since 1969, had seen it through its period of greatest growth.

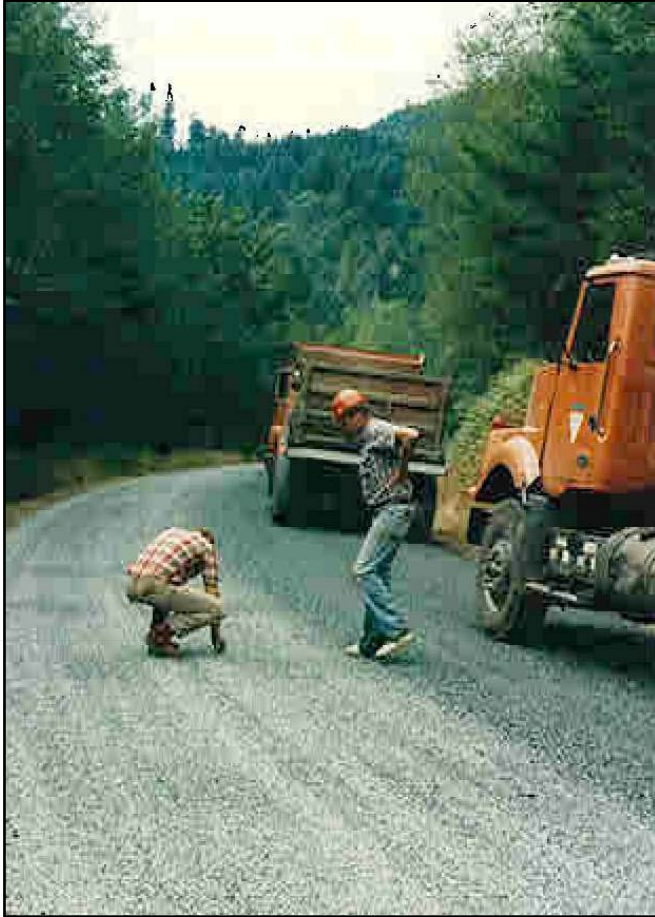
About the time that program operations were moved from Salem, Oregon, to Vancouver, Washington, and from a Federal-aid office to a Federal lands office, Bill Maltby became aware of rumblings in the higher echelons of FHWA and the BLM suggesting that the program might be

changing agencies. It was around 1974, he said, and in FHWA headquarters, there was a feeling "that this operation was kind of a country cousin....There was talk going on between the Washington offices about moving the program out of here."

Those in the field had a much different opinion about it than those in Washington. The man who was the BLM State Director in the early 1970's "didn't want to move it out of FHWA," Bill said. "We had it coordinated and...it was really operating smooth." This was partly due to the camaraderie and close cooperation between the BLM and FHWA field people. "If you wanted to move something from Medford to Eugene, you



*Members of the Walton WORM crew were recipients of safety awards July 10, 1980. From left they are **Mike Eastman, Arnold Haynes, Dean Barnhardt, Roger Bethel, Richard L. Enders, Bill Maltby**. Not pictured: **Bob McKinney**. Photo courtesy Bill Maltby.*



*Above and top: Wells Creek-Vincent Road, early 1970's.
Photo courtesy Bill Maltby.*

could move it on a temporary basis. If you wanted to move it from Eugene to Coos Bay” he went on, “you didn’t have to go to the BLM district manager.”

At that time, funding for the BLM road maintenance program was paid out of the timber programs at the request of the “**O&C counties**,” the counties that incorporated some of the lands originally given to the Oregon & California Railroad Company. “Those funds were not steady,” Bill said. In fact, they operated much “like the stock market. Up one month, down one month.”

In order to even out these peaks and valleys, FHWA bought and maintained all the equipment. “(FHWA) rented it back to the BLM, essentially.” Bill explained that “we had it on a certain life span and we paid for this equipment by rental.” They also supplemented the program with Federal Lands funds.

“The fact that they were able to work through the FLHP stabilized the programs,” Bill said, and this advantage did not go unrecognized by the State Director. “In his discussions among (his) people, (he said), ‘this is one of the reasons I want to keep this in FHWA hands.’”

At one time Bill had promoted the idea among BLM managers that they apply for Federal Lands monies to help get the same type of support as the Forest Service, Park Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs received. “It was 1972, 1973....I said ‘why don’t you people go to FHWA and get more funds for your public lands roads maintenance?’ Well supposedly they did,” he said, but what they submitted was apparently too general in nature, “and the FHWA, of course, said ‘wait a minute, this is not much of a program here. We need more justification.’” BLM, he said, decided it was “too much work, we’ll do it with our own funds.”

With the inconsistent nature of the public lands funds, however, “the maintenance done on the roads was practically nil. We’d go out and there’d be a trail; there wouldn’t be a road, there’d be a trail, (and) you’d want an ATV instead.”

Around 1974 that particular State Director was transferred to BLM headquarters in Washington, DC, and another person took over the program for Western Oregon. Immediately the district managers—he recalled “there were two that were really instigators—started working with the (new) state director to see about moving the program out of the FHWA.”

There was also some impetus on the part of FHWA, both internally and politically, Bill admitted. “I hate to say it, but I think that FHWA...was beginning to feel that this was kind of a thorn in their sides....”

“One period when Nixon was in there, personnel became an issue....They were saying ‘we’ll cut down the expenses of FHWA by getting rid of some of these personnel.’ Well one way to do it” was to cut the entire Western Oregon Roads Maintenance Program, “and ‘Bingo!’ ...We got rid of 100 people.”

“Then about 1975-76...BLM and FHWA came to an agreement that they would move the “program into the BLM,” Bill said, “much to my chagrin—and everybody’s....You had some fellows that had been with FHWA for 10 or 15 years and they were managed well and cooperation was great and there was a strong group feeling among everybody, even...upper level management.”

Once the decision was made, “FHWA and BLM sat down—the state director and the different organizations within the group—sat down and discussed the issues.” There had been many things that worked well while the program was under FHWA, “like the procurement. We had our own procurement offices.” There were also a number of issues to be resolved, and “there was quite a bit of worry,” Bill said, between “the local management—our management here—and the Regional Office.”

BLM’s answer to the issues brought to the table “was that we can do everything you can do and everything would be smooth. Well sadly it wasn’t,” he said. As soon as the program had been moved, “the district managers started in on the state director and said ‘this thing should be out in the districts, we should be running this program.’”

The State Director was apparently not convinced, and decided a study should be done before any changes were made. “The man that was in charge of their technical services office...was about ready to retire,” and the State Director appointed him to the task. “He made a review, went out to the people out in the field...talked to the state BLM people,” Bill related and “the gist of his report was to keep it in the state office under a centralized management just like FHWA had it.” That structure, he said, “gives a lot of freedom to the people in the field to move...around as needed. That keeps the number of people and the equipment down.”

BLM Developed Recreation Sites

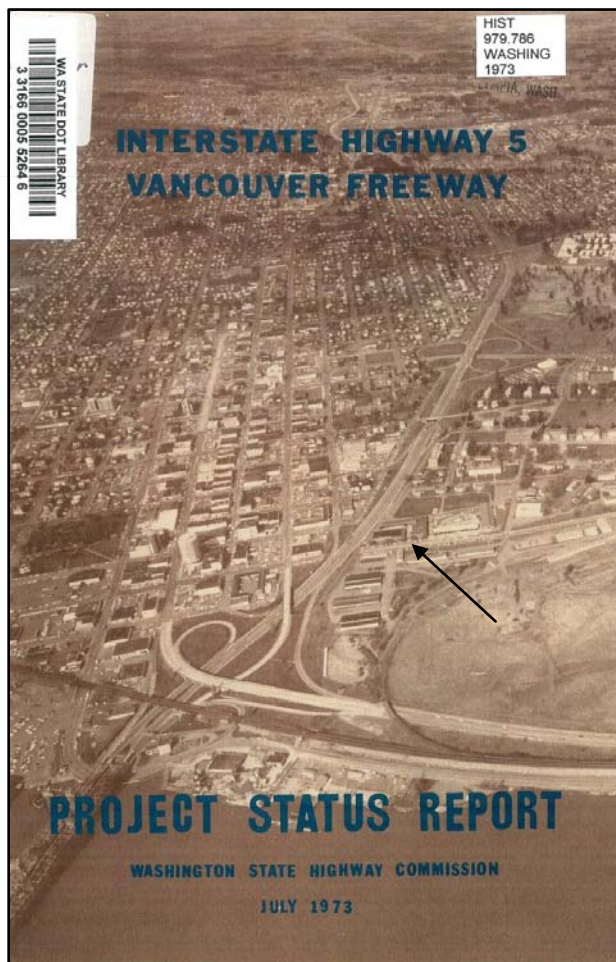
SITE NAME	INDEX	FEE		ELEVATION (FEET)		CAMP UNITS	PICNIC AREA?	DRINKING WATER	BOATING	Swimming
		CAMPING	PER DAY	Min	Max					
SALEM DISTRICT										
Dovre	C-2			1520	7 10	2	●	●	●	●
Fan Creek	C-2			1250	7 12		●	●	●	●
Elk Bend	C-2			950	1	7	●	●	●	●
Alder Glen	C-2			700	7 7	4	●	●	●	●
Mill Creek	D-2			500	1	18	●	●	●	●
Missouri Bend	E-2			250	1	10	●	●	●	●
Alsea Falls	E-2	●		800	7 16	22	●	●	●	●
N. Fork Eagle Cr.	C-3	●		600	7 23		●	●	●	●
Wildwood	C-3	●		1200	1	62	●	●	●	●
Canyon Creek	D-3			900	1	15	●	●	●	●
Elkhorn Valley	D-3			1000	7 16	13	●	●	●	●
Fisherman's Bend	D-3	●		750	7 38	21	●	●	●	●
Dogwood	D-3			1100	1	9	●	●	●	●
Yellowbottom	D-3	●		150	7 23	16	●	●	●	●
EUGENE DISTRICT										
Whittaker Creek	F-2	●		300	14 31	9	●	●	●	●
Clay Creek	F-2	●		500	18 20	9	●	●	●	●
Shotgun	E-3			800	1	22	●	●	●	●
Sharps Creek	F-3			1200	14 10	2	●	●	●	●
ROSEBURG DISTRICT										
Gunter	F-2			600	14 8	8	●	●	●	●
Tyce	G-2	●		210	14 10	12	●	●	●	●
Lone Rock	G-2			720	1	8	●	●	●	●
Mill Pond	G-3	●		1090	14 12	27	●	●	●	●
Rock Creek	G-3	●		1200	14 17		●	●	●	●
Scaredman	G-3			1350	14 10		●	●	●	●
Susan Creek	G-3	●		1100	14 33	8	●	●	●	●
Susan Creek Trail	G-3			1600			●	●	●	●
Cavitt Creek	G-2	●		1100	14 8	8	●	●	●	●
Wolf Creek Trail	G-3			1100			●	●	●	●
Emile	G-3			1260	14 4	5	●	●	●	●
COOS BAY DISTRICT										
Smith River Falls	F-2			100	14 8		●	●	●	●
Vincent Creek	F-2	●		180	1	5	●	●	●	●
Loon Lake	F-2	●		700	14 60	35	●	●	●	●
East Shore	F-2	●		700	14 4	1	●	●	●	●
Park Creek	G-2			500	14 12		●	●	●	●
Bear Creek	H-2			700	14 17		●	●	●	●
Sixes River	H-1			400	14 19		●	●	●	●
MEDFORD DISTRICT										
Tucker Flat	H-2			650	7 12		●	●	●	●
Shady Branch	H-2			3150	14 4		●	●	●	●
Deer Creek	I-2			1520	14 16		●	●	●	●
Elderberry Flat	H-2			1990	14 10	3	●	●	●	●
Gold Nugget	I-2			1140	1		●	●	●	●
Little Applegate	I-3			2480	1		●	●	●	●
Kenny Meadows	I-3			2560	1		●	●	●	●
Hyatt Lake	I-3	●		5000	7 25		●	●	●	●
Surveyor	I-3			5160	14 8		●	●	●	●
Topsy	I-3			3800	14 12		●	●	●	●
LAKEVIEW DISTRICT										
Gerber Reservoir	I-4	●		4800	14 50		●	●	●	●
Highway Well	H-5			4500	1	12	●	●	●	●
PRINEVILLE DISTRICT										
Blue Hole (for handicapped)	C-4			790	14 6		●	●	●	●
Beavertail	C-5	●		544	14 21		●	●	●	●
Trout Creek	D-4			1050	14 15	18	●	●	●	●
Macks Canyon	C-5	●		515	14 16		●	●	●	●
Chimney Rock	E-5			3096	14	39	●	●	●	●
BURNS DISTRICT										
Chickahominy	F-6			4350		16	●	●	●	●
Page Springs	H-7			4200	16	16	●	●	●	●
Fish Lake	H-7			7900	14 20	5	●	●	●	●
Jackman Park	H-7			8100	14	5	●	●	●	●
VALE DISTRICT										
Chukar Park	F-7			3100	14 19		●	●	●	●
Spring	F-7			2000	14	10	●	●	●	●
Twin Springs	F-7			3240	1	3	●	●	●	●
Leslie Gulch	F-7			2800	14	8	●	●	●	●
Cow Lakes	F-7			4340	10		●	●	●	●
Antelope	F-7			4320	4		●	●	●	●
Snively Hot Springs	F-7			2600	14		●	●	●	●

From an Oregon BLM Resource Map, © 1984. WORM crews maintained roads to many of these recreation sites. Map courtesy Bill Malthy.

But pressures from the districts finally prevailed. “I think it was probably about 1980, we got a new state director and the State Director bowed to the District Managers and moved the things out to the districts.” Bill was still working in the State Office, and “all I had was an equipment specialist...working for me (who) wrote all the specifications for the equipment for purchases and presented it to the procurement people.”

Ironically, had the Western Oregon Roads Maintenance program not been moved to BLM, it would soon have been required to find a new home within FHWA.

The equipment depot which Bill Maltby managed in the Federal Projects Office facility in Vancouver occupied what was originally known as “Building B,” only a small section of which still remains. In 1977, in anticipation of the widening of the I-5 freeway, FHWA ceded most of that building and all of an adjacent building that fronted on Fifth Street to the state right-of-way office.



Among other favorite memories of the WORM program, Bill Maltby recalled that “the procurement people ... went out of their way to get the things that we needed without a lot of hassle.” Watch for future stories that will highlight his contracting and purchasing adventures as well as his early days with FHWA in the foreign aid program.

Stories in this series have been developed by Marili Reilly from interviews and correspondence. Retirees who would like to share their memories may email marili.reilly@dot.gov.

At left, the cover of a document in the archives of Western Federal Lands Highway Division shows an earlier view of the FHWA neighborhood, including the building used for the equipment depot before it was trimmed down for I-5 construction. An administrative building that fronted on Fifth Street was also lost (see arrow).