Oral History Number: 428-003
Interviewee: Tracy Stone-Manning
Interviewer: David Brooks
Date of Interview: June 3, 2011
Project: David Brooks Milltown Dam Interview Oral History Project

David Brooks: Today is June 3, 2011. My name is David Brooks and today I am interviewing Tracy Stone-Manning who was the long-time director of the Clark Fork Coalition during that organization’s efforts to get the Milltown Dam removed along the upper Clark Fork River.

DB: I guess what I would like to start out with is, if you don’t mind talking a little bit about your personal background. How you got involved in environmental organizations in general, the Clark Fork Coalition? Interest in rivers? Just whatever brought you to the point of being in the Clark Fork Coalition.

Tracy Stone-Manning: Yeah, I came to Montana in 1988 for graduate school degree in Environmental Studies. You know, fell in love with the place on the weekend I came to visit the campus, literally only applied to one school. Thought if I get in, I’m coming. If I don’t, I’m coming. I got in. I don’t know what captured me about the environment. Why do any of us have the passions we have? But, I was certainly captured by it and was sort of calculated in my academic career undergraduate degree in Radio-TV-Film and half way through that is I sort of fell in love with the outdoors. And I realized that I am not going to continue on with this degree because people don’t really know how to talk about these issues. I could... this training could help me translate...I’m never going to be a scientist but maybe I could translate the science. Then continued on that vein and decided that I needed some science which is why I came to the environmental studies program. Continued on that vein and did my masters in advertising with the whole notion that we been duped into over-consuming with advertising perhaps we can be duped through advertising into living more sustainably to be really crass about it.

DB: So how about the Clark Fork, as in specific interests or the Milltown Dam, how did you move in that direction?

TSM: I became friends with the folks who worked at the Clark Fork Coalition when I was subletting or working right next door The Five Alley’s Land Trust at the time in the early ‘90s. Then I joined the Clark Fork Coalition Bard. When the director’s position opened up in ’99, I was a board chair, and immediately started to solicit resumes. A board member and a staff member said, “What are you doing, you should apply!” I realized, “Yeah I should.” In part because I saw the Clark Fork Coalition as a way to expand and change how we do conservation, how we practice conservation. I was very clear with the board at the time that this was a science based
advocacy group about water quality in a river. If I take this job, it needs to be more than that. It needs to be about community. It needs to be about place. That is how we can get out of our corners about being conservationists or environmentalists. We can just be community members who care about where we live. The board said yes and so I took the job. That was in August of ’99. Quickly realized that my job was to keep an organization viable, and that we were missing the big thing we were working on.

We’d just come off the Blackfoot River effort to protect that from the world’s largest...one of the world’s ten largest gold mines. So we needed something to keep people engaged about all the other issues that don’t make the headlines. As I looked at the superfund complex from Butte down to Milltown and as I kept hearing about the Milltown issue, I think it was a fresh set of eyes. I said, “There are so many problems. Why aren’t we advocating for cleaning it all up and taking out the dam?” People were like, uh, ‘cause that’s big! ‘Cause that’s too big. ‘Cause that’s maybe not technically doable because it’s certainly probably not politically doable. But the more we looked at it, the more it made absolute sense to not be cautious and careful about...that’s the way everybody had been approaching that site because it was dicey on every level. But, that, that...without the sort of [limited] look I only care about fish or I only care about ground water or I only care about dam safety or fiscal responsibility. All those little slices of the pie in and of itself would not be, perhaps, enough to say, well let’s call for dam removal. But when added up together, it made the most logical sense. So, we spent the fall making sure it made logical sense. By the early, winter of 2000, it was February of 2000 we launched the campaign. I remember taking it to, you know, you have to get the board to approve an annual plan, the budget that goes with that plan. It was goal number two, remove Milltown Dam. We were careful about making it not huge even though it became huge. But, it was a modest approach at the beginning.

DB: Can you remind really quickly and tell me who those people were that said you met that were running the Clark Fork Coalition when you were subletting or...

TSM: Yeah.

DB: living next them. Who was involved already?

TSM: At the time, the Coalition was in a dicey place. It had just had a rocky sort of go with an executive director that was C.B. Pearson (?). Then there was... He left on bad terms with the board. There were threats of lawsuits. There was not a lot of money in the bank. There was still really great staff and really important work to do. So, Meg Nelson who had been the development director stepped up to be acting executive director. Karen Knudsen who is currently the director, at the time, was she a finance person then? She has done almost every job in the Coalition. But, then became sort of its communications arm. And really it was...They

Tracy Stone-Manning Interview, OH 428-003, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
sort of joked about it. It was smoke and mirrors like making the organization look stronger than it really was because the goals and vision behind were strong. They propped up the organization and did all the necessary boring, ugly, not ugly, just boring organizational work you had to do. Like you have to, you know, you need bylaws that make sense. You need a personnel policy that makes sense. So, Meg, incredibly gifted organizationally, did all of that and put together a very solid, modest fundraising plan to get the organization back on its feet. It was...
you know...

As I was watching all this non-profit drama next door, we became friends and Meg said, “Would you get on the board?” At the time, Jeff Smith was the staff scientist. Jeff was here for the beginning, the launch of Milltown Campaign. They just did... Many non-profits do that right. Their founder leaves and then they...then there is some stumbling. Meg and Karen lifted it up and made sure it didn’t fail and strong board members as well. By the time that Meg left in ’99, it was pretty solid. The budget was still pretty modest. I think it was $180,000 a year which I quickly just ramped up. But, I had the basis from which to ramp it up. That just hadn’t been there five years earlier. If all that organizational housekeeping hadn’t happen, there still would be a dam in place today.

DB: Are you able to speak to the earlier Clark Fork Coalition history how it began?

TSM: Little bit

DB: Are you familiar with the story of how it got launched?

TSM: Little bit, yeah and I would talk to Peter about that too if I were you, Peter Nielsen. The story that we told sort of over and over again was... in 1984 or so... I think the organization was founded in’85. But, people began to be concerned about the amount of discharge that Champion Mill which later began Smurfit Stone, the pulp mill in Frenchtown [that] wanted to increase its discharge into the river. People from as far as Sandpoint came on buses to the hearings about that. The sort of Clark Fork Coalition was born out of that controversy. Very early on, planted its flag on being science-based. At the time, had a bunch of...like Montana Power Company and bunch of other sort of companies as business supporters and members which fell by the wayside as it became clear that, “wait a second, these guys are trying... have opposing views from us.” Because it was science-based and because Peter Nielsen and right on his heels Bruce Farling working with Peter were sort of founding staff members. They set the tone for “everything we do is going to be based in fact.” How we engage is going to be in a respectful way. The whole sort of culture there is to the Coalition was planted right from the beginning. Less, community based, right, and more just about water quality and we’re speaking for the fish in the water. Then, ultimately sort of grew to that community watershed wide effort. But, they set up the Coalition as watershed organization before watershed organizations

Tracy Stone-Manning Interview, OH 428-003, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
were hip. They were the first to sort of say, look water flows down hill to those people in Sandpoint. Everybody should engage around this river.

DB: Was there anybody else doing that that you know of? I mean were they really the first or were they the first wave of... environmental organizations...

TSM: I think... I don’t know that

DB: Thinking in terms of watersheds?

TSM: They certainly weren’t the first, but they were in the first wave. And, certainly way before it was a household word or you know, hip. Way before.

DB: At this point we are thirty years from when arsenic was first discovered in wells behind... around the reservoir. Obviously, we can’t recount the entire thirty years, but from your perspective, what have been the major turning points in that time. You already, I think, sort of mentioned a few in terms of the Clark Fork Coalition’s history. But in terms of history of whole Milltown Dam’s story, what are the big turning points.

TSM: Yeah, somebody calling the health department and saying, “My water tastes funny”. Mercifully, there was some sort of nutrient pollution that was making their water taste funny. Because, you know, you can’t taste arsenic. So that was huge.

Then doing the science to trace that back to sediments and tracing those sediments to the mines was a battle, right. But, proving that they were connected was big. The 1996 ice jam was huge. There was ...the EPA had a document that they were sending to the printers, a feasibility study about that site, that they pulled from the printers after the ice jam because they realized that we have a bigger problem here than ground water. We have a surface water issue as well. Because of the fish kill that was documented as a result, I think it was 56 to 85% of fish depending on age and class, went missing, right. Sandy Stash, one of my favorite quotes of hers, “But we don’t know, we don’t know that they died we never found their bodies”.

(Laughter) It was like, seriously. Which is sort of stunning, that a cooperate person can say that. If somebody from the Clark Fork Coalition ever said something like that, we would be admonished, sat in the corner, and never heard from again.

DB: So just to clarify Sandy Stash was the PR person for ARCO?

TSM: Yeah and more than PR person. She was sort of the lead person in ARCO. She also was the person in the press. She was an engineer and the person negotiating the cleanup for ARCO, and was a rather worthy adversary. So the ice jam of ’96 and then the ensuing floods in ’97 were ... made people say, “Oh wait second, let’s put the brakes on here. We have a different problem

Tracy Stone-Manning Interview, OH 428-003, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
than we knew at Milltown.” Listing of the Bull Trout as a threaten species in ’98 added a big factor because the dam doesn’t have any fish passage. Montana Power getting out of the power business was a factor. Yeah, I would say those were the biggies.

Then, the Edwards Dams coming down in New England. I...That’s part of the reason that I was able to, “Wait a second, why don’t we just clean up these sediments and take out this dam”. Because Bruce Babbitt, the Secretary of the Interior, stood with a sledge hammer in his hand at the Edwards Dam and said, “It’s a new day in America.” He said something like, “I’m not saying all dams need to go, but we need justify what dams remain.” There was no real public purpose or justification for Milltown. It was under three megawatts of power. It was one and half at the time the campaign started because a couple turbines went down, and they never replaced them. So it... You know, there I was sitting on my couch in Missoula, Montana reading a New Yorker story saying “Wait a second, if they can do it, why can’t we?” So I think that was part as well. I would say those are the big ones.

DB: What about, you said that in... after ’96 ice jam, the EPA was sending out this feasibility study and they pulled it, decided it was a bigger problem. Was that decision just an in-house EPA decision? Was anybody influencing that? Did the Clark Fork Coalition speak up?

TSM: Yes, that was before my time. But, yes. I think the Coalition said, “Hey wait a second we got dead fish.” Also, it was just abundantly clear. I think the EPA itself said, “Oh wait a second, we are not analyzing fully. We’ll have a problem if we go forward with this document because we are not analyzing fully the issue here.” The feasibility study is one of the many documents in the Superfund process. It sort of lays out the various potential alternatives and dam removal was not in it. I mean, when we started our campaign, we had to go to the EPA and say, “We really want you to put dam removal as one of the options. It has to be on the table.” I think because of what happened with the ice jam, that enabled them to say maybe we should. We had to push hard for them to even consider it seriously as one of the potentials at the site.

DB: So when did you go to them and make that request?

TSM: You know we did that early. We did that in spring of... probably March of 2000 maybe, March or April. No, I take that back. It would have been January. Because we did it before we had formally launched a campaign saying “We are the Clark Fork Coalition. We want to a clean up this reservoir and take out this dam.” We made courtesy calls, and also heads-up calls, to various folks. We went to Montana Power and said we are about launch this campaign to remove your dam. We went to the EPA to say “we are about to launch this campaign, and we really, really, really need you to consider it seriously as one of alternatives. Because, we think it fits within the mission in what you are trying to achieve and the legality of what you are trying to achieve.”

Tracy Stone-Manning Interview, OH 428-003, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
DB: So that was part of, I mean I want to talk a little bit more about this campaign to remove the dam, what all did that involve? Describe to me a new campaign for a Coalition?

TSM: It... I am trying to figure out where I should go with this first. There were mechanics of a campaign, right. Then there are the partners. One of the things that we did right away that in the end helped us win was engaged the county [Missoula County]. So we... the official launch that was around a news hook, a news peg that was had something to do with FERC [Federal Energy Regulatory Commission] relicensing the dam. We needed something to go the public and say, “Hey, ask FERC not to relicense this dam.” We formally requested to intervene in the proceedings. We invited the county to our press conference when we did the launch.

We had an airplane come up because people didn’t even... Lot of people had no idea that site even existed just seven miles upstream. They didn’t know where Milltown Dam was. They didn’t...It just was not in their sort of community view. We had to get visuals. Get people up in the air looking at it. Get the press up in the air looking at it so there was videotape over for six, seven months afterwards, B roll that TV stations kept using when they were talking about Milltown. But, we got... we invited the county to the press conference. Then we asked the county to do intervene with us. They decided to do that. In part because, the reason we were asking for FERC to look at the relicensing was for the safety, potential safety hazards of that dam. So, it was a perfect hook for the commissioners downstream to say wait a second. It’s their county. Very early on, Barbra Evans, then county commissioner, had been around for eighteen, nineteen years, conservative Republican. Early on, she got on board with this campaign. That made it a bipartisan thing right away. So it became not a political issue, but a community issue. There are lots of reasons for it to be controversial. But, simply partisan politics was not one of those reasons. It was taken off the table really early. We owe her great credit for that. So our goal was to make it a community issue not just an environmental issue.

Getting the county engaged right from the beginning is huge. You can’t ask for better spokespersons. You got people concerned about public health and dam safety that are not those Chicken Little, wacko enviros from Missoula. It’s the county! It was huge. There was that sort of angle of get as many partners on board as possible and let them run with it. It’s counterintuitive for a conservation organization that is raising money and needs all the headlines, but the way to win. We had to check ourselves a lot and say, “Hold on a second, Peter is the better messenger for that” or “So that was a little counterintuitive,” but in the end part of the reason why we were successful.

Then we realized that we were asking the EPA, and specifically John Wardell, head of the EPA in Montana, to make this huge decision. To go way farther on Superfund than they had gone anywhere else in the basin. The way, the mechanics of how the agency solicits public comment works, we thought wouldn’t work from them. Because what they do is sort of say, “Here’s our
proposed plan. What do you think public?” And they solicit public comment. Well, by the time you plant the flag, it is too late. We thought, okay, if we are going, if John Wardell is going to plant the flag on dam removal, he is going to need to know he has got ton of support. So we created a public comment period that didn’t exist. We just started to flood the EPA with comments saying “please call for removal.”

We did sort of a pre-comment period campaign so that they knew they would have public support. There’s a list of criteria that they have to look at when making their decision. One of them is local acceptance. One of them is state acceptance. So we needed them to know that they would have that even at the proposal stage. We ended up, over the course of a couple summers, getting them...so the window of the campaign was really from 2000 when we launched, February of 2000 to January of 2003. There is a lot that happened after January of 2003. But, January 2003 was when the Governor Martz announced in her State of the State [Address] that she supported dam removal. So that was the big state acceptance piece. That gave... and we knew if she did that that the EPA would by then be on board. They would follow. But, it was a Republican Governor under President Bush. President Bush who on the campaign trail said there would be no dams coming down under his watch and who believes in state’s rights. So, Governor Martz extensively helped. She held a veto card. I mean if she had said absolutely not, she would have had the power to actually... It would have been a much longer and harder fight. So, getting her to sign off was huge. Two days later, John Wardell was saying the documents aren’t ready. But when the documents come out, we are going to call for dam removal. I mean, that was the win. The rest was the ball rolling down the hill making sure the process, the actual things they were calling for, how many cubic yards? What kind of sediment removal? All those details were still incredibly important and needed be worked out. But, the ball was rolling down hill.

Between 2000 and 2003 is when we did most of our work, and it entailed one-on-one interaction at the Farmer’s Market and every public place possible, getting people to sign postcards. We went to every community group that would have us to explain the issue because there was a lot of nuts and bolts and a lot of concerns. We ran...spent a lot of money on advertising. You know, I put my thesis to work. We spent $80,000 on ad buys. But, it became... when it was in the newspaper through ad buys and when it was on TV through ad buys, people sort of took it more seriously like, “Oh, it’s a real thing!” which is goofy but true. They just...treated it differently. Then, we also just were with great intent said; “We have got to keep this in the news” like a slow drum beat. There is got be a different angle to the story. Every couple weeks, we have got to be in the news. It doesn’t have to be the Clark Fork Coalition, but the issue has to be in the news. We took that on with great intent like “what’s next week story going to be?” and went and found it, figured out who the person was that was going to talk about and pitch it. Then some of it because...

Tracy Stone-Manning Interview, OH 428-003, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
I would talk to Sherry Devlin if I were you. She got into that story, and she did not let go. Her reporting generated reporting, right. Because the more she dug, the more she found to report on. We did things like, “Let’s bring in somebody from the community on the Kennebec River that took out the Edwards Dam.” So we brought in the city manager who had opposed it and now sang it praises. Let’s bring in somebody who is going through a sediment removal. So, we brought in somebody from the Hudson River who is fighting GE and where it was a big controversy. Do we want to stir up these sediments that have PCBs in them? Because Sandy Stash at ARCO was saying, “Do we really want to mine in the middle of a river?” That’s what those people are asking for. When things like that come up, we would try to bring as much outside wisdom and influence as possible which then also create news. There was as much education as possible. Then we did things like in the campaign, you know, something as simplistic of a bumper sticker made a huge difference. They were, as you remember, everywhere! They were everywhere because we didn’t charge for them, right.

DB: This is the ‘Remove the Dam, Restore the River” bumper sticker?

TSM: Yeah. We gave them away, gave them away everywhere. I don’t know why. But, it just caught on and was the thing to have on your car. One day, I pulled into the grocery store parking lot, grant it was the Good Food Store, and like... three quarters of the cars in the parking lot had the bumper sticker on them. Alright, I think we are going to win this thing. But, I mean as something as, yeah, of course it cost money to print those bumper stickers, but don’t charge for them. Then, there was the day I saw the same color, same design, and same color mock bumper sticker that said, “Remove Missoula, Restore the Valley.” Hilarious! Right, okay now we really are winning. (Laughter)

At some point, you know, people analyze these things, right what was the tipping point? I don’t know what the tipping point was. I just know we got there. There was just critical mass and that it became a sense of, before the decision was made, it became a sense of fait accompli. Like there were so many people talking about this and the Missoulian is paying so much attention to it. It just the community buzz that it’s gotta! At some point, somebody was like, “Well, of course, you are going to win.” And I was like, “No, we haven’t won yet!” Nobody in power has said we are going to do this yet. We can’t stop. But, there was this sense of inevitability before the actual decision that was in part the reason why. I went into a Rotary Club meeting, were asked for five thousand dollars for the education campaign. And they gave us five thousand dollars. I thought, “The Rotary Club just gave us five thousand dollars!” They were very clear like “this is not to advocate, this is to educate.” We were like “Okay that’s what we’re doing.” Because when you educate, people go, “Oh yeah, that makes the most sense.” So, that was sort of the goal of the campaign, the whole focus and goal of the campaign was to give the EPA the
space and backing it needed to make the decision. When there was information missing that they didn’t want to go get like science information, we went and got that too.

Mountain Water was making a big fuss about how the (?) could change dynamics during the clean up and that their downstream wells would be polluted. EPA said, “Yeah, that just not going to happen. We don’t think it’s going happen. But, we are not going bother to model it because we know it’s not going to happen.” Well we had a PhD geomorphologist on staff. We asked, “Chris, can you do that modeling?” She said, “Yeah, we are going to have to buy software that cost a couple thousand bucks.” We went to Mountain Water and said, “Would you pay for this software and this PhD will do it?” They said okay.

That was all about let’s just bring whatever we need to bring to the decision space for the EPA in the form of information or in the form of public support. That is our job. We did so. The more that we could engage the communities in this, the better off we were.

Ideas came from the community, like my favorite. Jack Moyer,(?) member of the Clark Fork Coalition, comes up to me in the grocery store one day, and says, “Do you know what you need?” “What do we need, Jack?” “You need a big flotilla from the dam into Missoula!” And I said, “We totally need a big flotilla from the dam into Missoula.” So, we organized what became Milltown to Downtown. We advertised the first summer. We advertised. We had fun mockups about why you should just come to this. The day before we were a little bit panicked like, okay, you got a boat right? Okay, you get a bunch of friends on your boat and Fighting Farlings got a boat and we will call him. Okay, we just need make sure that the photo op is there. We will have at least ten or fifteen boats. We didn’t need to do that because fifteen hundred people came. It was crazy! It still makes my eyes water with...I just kept saying “Who are these people, and I love them!” It helped that it was hundred degrees. (Laughter) It was a July day. But, it was this very cool expression of people saying, “No, this is what we want!” Then the following year 3,000 people came. That got scary because of public safety reasons so we dialed it down. The last year 2,000 people came. People who are not “those environmentalists from Missoula,” it was grandmas, babies, and frat boy. I mean, it was everybody. The very first year, I was floating underneath the footbridge, right as we are pulling into Missoula, underneath the footbridge and I look up. There’s John Wardell standing on the bridge with a big grin on his face. I was like, “Ha ha, hi, John, these people they support you!” That was the whole goal and it worked.

DB: So I got three questions out of that. I guess the best place to start is with John Wardell. What was his position with the EPA first of all? He was the state representative?

TSM: State Director, right. So Montana has the misfortune of having enough Superfund sites and enough issues that EPA had an office here. Other states, Wyoming for example, deals out of Region 8 in Denver. But, Montana has an office here. Although technically it was the regional
director’s call to make these decisions, it was John’s. John would go to the Region and say, “Here’s the...here’s what the decision should be.” There’s only onsite where the Region... where all the work happened out of the Denver office. That is Libby. It was sort of big enough nationally in scope that... Frankly, it would have been handled better out of the Helena Office. The trust dynamic would have been very different. We would have a better clean up and a better community dynamic there, I think if that hadn’t happened out of Denver. But, that is a tangent. So, John was the decision maker and a consummate professional. So respectful, polite, and cautious, never, he never tipped his hand to me, right. He never ever said, “Tracy, I am going to call for dam removal.” I didn’t know it ‘til I read it in the paper. But, I knew that’s where he was going. I could just... I could tell by the way he was engaging that was what he wanted to do. But, he was really professional. I mean, he taught me a lot about how to engage when there are many, many different decisions, many opinions around a given decision. He... At one meeting ARCO was holding, no, it was actually an EPA meeting, and it was about a potential... They had not yet made the decision. So, they were looking at various potential designs, I think, for each of the clean-ups and focusing on sediment removal and dam removal. John said to me, “The two words that I am concerned about now are arbitrary and capricious.” I thought, “He is going to call dam removal, and he is going to make sure that he isn’t going to get sued by ARCO.” Right, that’s what that means. Those are his legal... Those are the two things legally that could bring him down. So, okay let’s give the EPA what it needs to make sure this is not arbitrary or capricious.

DB: So just to make sure I am hearing you right. It is so easy again to get into the habit of talking about what the EPA did as if it is institution acting, and yet it seems like you’re saying this individual made a difference.

TSM: Absolutely.

DB: Had it not been John Wardell, the story would be different, possibly.

TSM: That’s exactly right. And, had it not been Russ Forba, the project manager, the story would have been different. Because, John gave a lot of deference to his project mangers, not full deference but a lot of. I remembering talking to Russ Forba and teasing him. Because Russ in the beginning was like, eye-rolling about dam removal like there is just no way. Then it sort of became the highlight of his career. I mean, he was the project manger for this huge effort. He just jumped in with both feet and with great vigor and took it on being engaged and excited about it. But even before the decision was made, but it was some what clear that the EPA was heading that direction, I was teasing Russ. He said, “I am a good soldier.” That tells me that that came from John.
DB: Well, I do remember reading Sherry Devlin’s stories where John Wardell said “I personally think the dam ought to be removed but EPA has not come to that decision.” How big a deal was that...

TSM: Huge!

DB: ...for him to personally come and say that.

TSM: Huge. (laughter) Yeah, I mean huge. In part because he was, he was like I said... he was also... he was so careful about how he engaged personally because its not... his personal opinions are not... don’t matter!

DB: Right, they are not supposed to.

TSM: They are not supposed to, right. I think it...I mean many people would...Many environmental groups would have viewed the EPA as the adversary and would have tried to bully them into it. We did the opposite. EPA was the...We saw the EPA as a partner. We were not the decision-makers; our job was to give the decision-makers the tools they needed to make the right decision. Our adversary was ARCO, certainly. But even that, we... It is so typical to take on the big, bad corporation and say bad things. We wouldn’t even really go there. We would just say, you know, Sandy Stash is doing her job. Her job is to spend as little money on a cleanup as possible because this corporation’s job is to dole out as big a dividend to their stock holders as possible. Right, they are doing their job. But, our job is different. Our community’s job is taking care of the place we live in. So, they are doing their job and that’s fine whatever. And just be like that’s what they are doing. Good for them. She does a good job at her job. But, our job is different. That gave moderates, conservatives, you know the folks that normally align themselves with business entities that gave them the space to join us in support of removal because we weren’t bashing people. That... we basically just tried to shove them aside and say good for them, whatever. They are going to leave. We’re all going to be here. The river is going to be here. We’re going be here. They are going to leave the state. That’s their job, clean up, go home. So, I think that was part of it as well. That was part of the larger... my personal, larger goal with the coalition, to make environmental issues more community issues. And to make a safer place for people to engage and feel like they weren’t going become “one of those”, those “ists”, right.

DB: Right, well you know, there’s, well I’m not sure how familiar you are with it, there is plenty of history out there on the environmental movement, the changes in the environmental movement. The general story of the Reagan Era and the end of Bush is that environmental groups were pushed out of federal agencies, became very anti-corporate and had to act outside of that framework. Yet, I hear over and over that you worked with the EPA, not against them,
considered them a partner. You don’t seem to have had or the Coalition doesn’t seem to have had just rote, antagonistic relationships with corporations. So that doesn’t seem to fit the model of what has been written about this time period, the ‘80s into the ‘90s, when it comes to the environmental movement.

TSM: Yeah, well it’s part of the reason we won. This was still ‘90s still into the early ‘00s. When necessary, we pushed back, like fighting the Seven up Pete Joint Venture and the gold mine there. Just to say no. It is an inappropriate place to dig one of the world’s ten largest gold mines. It’s not okay. But I, I mean, you just described what had been a personal frustration of mine... we are going to lose and continue to lose and continue to lose if we don’t change how it is we practice conservation. Right. We cannot preach to ourselves. These have to become values embued in the culture so that we don’t make the mistakes to begin with. We are cleaning up after other generations’ mistakes now. But, let’s get to a place where we ask the question up front about whether this is the appropriate kind of development and is it sustainable over time. That was just my personal; don’t get me wrong, Milltown Dam was a huge personal passion, mind it consumed four years of my life. I am really, really proud of it. But, much more largely and more important to me personally was that order, “How do we engage and practice conservation?” “What does that look like?”

You know funny, one of the reasons that we... One of the reasons that were quite stated internally about the Milltown Dam Campaign was finally then if we get folks really excited about this, we can get them engaged in the upper river cleanup. Right, water flows downhill. Missoula should be all over this; this cleanup that ended up being a hundred and twenty million dollar up there as well. That if we get people excited about this, we can get them engaged to push the EPA to a better place for the river cleanup. Because the EPA was heading towards a not so good cleanup, and it didn’t work. It worked in the end, but it wasn’t because of community engaged. I think the EPA when they realized where they were going with Milltown, then stepped up their game on the Upper Clark Fork. It wasn’t because thousands of people were asking them too. I mean we still got couple three; four thousand people to engage, but nothing like Milltown. I think they just thought well heck, if we can do it right at Milltown; let’s do it at the Upper Clark Fork too. So the cleanup plan they proposed was way better than it was going to be. So, it worked. But not because...we engaged the community to make it work. The lights went on at EPA and said, “Hey wait a second.” As a result, we not only got the dam removal, but we got a much better plan for cleanup of the upper Clark Fork, fifty-six river miles than we would have without the dam campaign. That’s part of the story that nobody really knows but a pretty sweet side benefit.

DB: So, we think of Superfund as a law, a immutable law. But, it sounds like, you have a least hinted at, a couple ways that Milltown, Clark Fork Coalition, the whole process changed the
way, maybe, the law was interpreted or used, or actual pieces of the law. You mentioned that the public, sort of the public input campaign, that you ran, preceded where it usually would have been in the process and that EPA ended up internalizing that...

TSM: Yup.

DB: ...and used that elsewhere.

TSM: Yup, yup.

DB: Other ways that this changed the EPA or changed the way Superfund works?

TSM: You know, they didn’t legally have to. They could have legally taken every one of those postcards and just dumped it in the trash can without even looking at it. But, they are humans. Their desks are piling up with mail. They are humans. They realized what all these people want so, maybe we should dig a little deeper into this alternative and begin to figure out how it could work. Like, let’s not give it the gloss over treatment. Let’s look and say, well could it work. They are humans, scientists, and engineers, and they want the world to be a better place too. So, when they begin to dig a little deeper and begin to realize, wait a second, “We can do this. We can pull this off.” That’s how I think that worked. But, legally, they did everything they we supposed to do. We just tossed things in from the side that they didn’t have to pay attention to, but they did.

Then other huge difference, huge, that gave John Wardell and everybody at EPA much more latitude was this was not in the Superfund world, this was not an Orphan Site. Right, we had a responsible party who had a big check book who could pay for this. Libby, they don’t have that. W.R Grace went bankrupt. It is the Superfund which is now depleted to zero that is paying for that cleanup. So when you don’t have funds available, you tailor your cleanup. You say, “Well here’s... you know, we are in a reality based world and this going to cost money.” But when you have a responsible party on the hook like the Clark Fork System has, you get a better cleanup. ARCO had the sad misfortune of buying the Anaconda Mining Company.

Another thing that happened, actually, in the early on, you had asked what some of the key factors were. British Petroleum bought ARCO. It took awhile for that to trickle down to the ground. But, ARCO had been entrenched at a personal level. They were so pissed off. That two years after these mining operations, they were shutting them down and going into cleanup. They fought it the entire cleanup. When British Petroleum bought it, and they looking at their books, they say, “What’s this tiny liability? Get it off our books.” Very different...it took awhile. But, the push back from the company became less and became less entrenched.
DB: That’s interesting. It is kind of counter intuitive that it was large mining corporations that caused all this in heavy metal sediment there, the problem really. But yet, it is large companies that made it possible to clean it up the way it got cleaned up. Had they not been there, had this been an Orphan Site, it wouldn’t happen the same way. There wouldn’t have been deep pockets.

TSM: Absolutely, if this were an Orphan Site, we would see a capped dam, or as Barbra Evans called it, “a rubber hot dog” on top of the spill way to prevent downstream pulses. We would see a dam that’s cobbled together stay in place to hold back those six million cubic yards. There would be a bunch of ground water under Milltown and Bonner that would be polluted with arsenic. There is no doubt in my mind.

DB: So, the other thing that I am interested in this campaign for dam removal is, you mentioned a number of times, you spent $80,000 on bumper stickers and ads. Where was the money coming from? I know early on in the Coalition there were corporate sponsors. At one point, the Coalition threatened to and maybe even did kick Montana Power Company off its membership. So where were the funds coming from?

TSM: When I started, I am pretty sure the budget was $180,000 a year which is lean. That is with a five staff, four staff or something like that. But the ratio has pretty much always stayed the same as the budget grew and grew. That was about, depending on the year, fifty to sixty percent income coming from foundation support, so foundations who give money to environmental causes and the rest coming from individuals; people who write twenty five dollar checks, people who write five thousand dollar checks. As we ramped up the campaign, we just ramped up our fundraising to go with it. There were a couple really fabulous strokes along the way. Not the least of which was, I would interview these folks to, and I’d go talk to Sean Benton at Partners Creative. Going into the campaign in February of 2000, we thought this is going to work because come November we are going to have Mark O’Keefe as our Governor and Al Gore as our President. Not! (laughter) Like both of those didn’t work. But we had enough traction by then. Russ Forba called me the day after the election and said, “Are you guys going still to keep pushing?” and I said, “We have no choice Russ. Train has left the station, and we got enough support. We are going to keep going”.

DB: This is after Al Gore lost?

TSM: Right, so after Al loses and Judy Martz wins in state, Russ calls me and says “You guys are going to keep doing this?” I was like, “MmmHmm.” He said, “Really?” I was like, “MmmHmm.” In part, we have gotten a lot; we had been through a first summer of effort. We had gotten a lot of support. It looked like we had enough support to keep going. What are we going to do? Say, “We are giving up because we don’t think we can win?” Not acceptable.
But Sherry Devlin asked the same question like “Oh, what are you going to do now?” By then, I had such a fluid relationship with her that I was silly. I didn’t say let’s go off the record. I just started to talk. Dumb! But a blessing in disguise. What I said was, “Well, we are going to have to really ramp it up now. We are going to have to go. We are going to have to do radio ads, billboards, and newspaper and TV. We are just going to have to ramp it up to get more support. I read this in the paper the next day and I think, “Nice job Tracy. Way to lay your cards on the table for Sandy Stash at ARCO. Way to let her know what’s coming!” But, Partners Creative read that article. They called me up and said we would like to talk to you about doing that work for you. I said, “Sure, come in show me a portfolio, and they did.” They interviewed me for forty-five minutes or an hour about the whole issue, and they came back a week later with a bunch of mock ads. They said this is the direction we could go in. I’m looking at the budgets for the ad buys. I finally said like, “Is your creative cost... are your creative costs embedded in these ad buys because I don’t see a line item here for you.” That is a huge part of an advertising campaign. They were like, “Oh yeah, no. We are doing this for free.” Then I said, “Okay, you’re hired! [laughs] and really are you sure?” And Sean said if that dam comes out, that is payment enough for us.

DB: So, it helps that Sean is a wild, river dog and fly fishermen.

TSM: It helps that they were a new company and looking to really stake their ground. Also, as a new company, they said “We are going to engage in community. That is part of who and what we are going to be as a company.” They pushed us to places...had we done it internally... right, Karen was pretty good in Photoshop, right. Many organizations would have done it internally and thought they could have pulled it off. Well, of course not, right? They are professionals. They are really good at what they do. They pushed us to places that we would not normally go like the billboard, “Ski Milltown, it’s toxic” right with the image of these 1950s women who were jet skiing or no, water skiing. Right, so they are in their tutus water skiing. I mean, it was funny! Also, it was not Clark Fork Coal... not science based Clark Fork Coalition. I had to think long and hard about running that. I took it to a bunch of people and said what do you think? What do you think? What do you think? I got everything from, “I don’t know. I think it subjugates women.” to “It’s funny!” The person that said it’s funny, should run it, is the administrative person over at the county auditor’s officer. The county auditor at the time, Susan Reed, was on our board. So, I was taking it to her. She said, “Well, you know, show it to her.” I can’t remember her name, “who is really conservative.” She laughed! I was like, “You don’t think it goes too far? You don’t think it is too cheeky?” She said, “That’s the problem with environmentalists (laughs). They don’t laugh enough!” In that split second, I thought we are running it. I want to capture this woman and all of her friends. I want to engage them. Partners Creative was smart enough to realize that you push like that and you catch other people who normally wouldn’t think two winks about an environmental issue.

Tracy Stone-Manning Interview, OH 428-003, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
DB: That’s so true. There are so many playful elements about this; even though, it is such a serious and life-threatening thing that was happening.

TSM: Yeah, yeah.

DB: There’s the Flotilla. People are out there having a good time. There were the funny bumper stickers and ads.

TSM: That taught me a lot. It helped us sort of think like okay...you can talk to yourselves as environmentalists or you can engage the broader community who doesn’t quite think like you do. That’s fine! We are all part of a community. So, they really helped that way. That’s fundraising by not... if you don’t spend revenue... That was a huge part of it. Then Russell Chatham did a series of four lithographs from around the Clark Fork Basin. Our Board Chair at the time was Jeff Sutton who had represented Russ through his art gallery. He not only did the lithographs, sweet, but he donated fifty sets of those to us. We sold them for $2,500 a piece. It was money falling from the sky. Russ is just a hell of good guy and a nice guy. He said “You’re doing good work.” At the same time, he was bringing the Clark Fork... sorry not the Clark Fork the Clark City Press back up, his publishing house. We were going to be one of the first books that he published. It was an anthology of essays from around the Clark Fork Basin and then also some history, deep history stuff, you know, 1908 Flood, clips from the Missoulian, stuff like that. So I am “negotiating” this book deal with Russ as he giving us fifty set of lithographs. He is being way too generous in the book deal too... just so generous. I finally said, “Russ, you can’t do that. That’s too generous, like your giving us all these lithographs too.” He said, “That is a different thing entirely. Those two are not even related.” I was like, okay, thank you. (laughs)

So, that is the beauty of working in a place like Montana and a place like Missoula where people are generous. They give up their time and their talent. That’s how we raised the money. Then ads, that’s kind of a fun thing to raise money for because people like them. You can show them to people and say we want to do more of this. And they say, okay let me write you a check. That’s easy... much easier fundraising.

DB: So, talk a little about the culture of Missoula that made all this possible; made it possible that you had Sean Benton who were willing to give their company’s work, Russell Chatham, his art, people who would buy a book, and the book you are referring to is The River We Carry with Us, right?

TSM: Yeah, yeah.

DB: What’s the culture around here and where does that come from that would support all that?
TSM: That’s why a bunch of us live here, right. It’s both our blessing as the Clark Fork Coalition and our curse because you go upstream to Anaconda and they are like “Pffff... You’re from Missoula, get out of here.” Like we... I’m going to answer your question in a second. But, this is a side story that is worth telling. Folks in Anaconda got pissed off that the EPA went the distance and made the decision that they made at Milltown. The whole sediment controversy, aside, about where the sediments were going to go. They were pissed off that Missoula got a “full cleanup and real cleanup.” One of their local development guys was like, “If the EPA makes that decision, I am going back to them and saying I want more cleanup in Anaconda.” like he is mad at me about it. I said, his name was Milo Manning, “Milo, we will go shoulder-to-shoulder with you back to the EPA. You kicked us out of Anaconda. Clark Fork Coalition was here in the ’80s trying to help, and you kicked us out”. They were a company town. They had to...it was there ethic, their culture, and their comfort zone to buy into what the company was selling.

Missoula was never the mining company town. We just weren’t. We were a timber company town, but not a mining company town. So, we, the Clark Fork Coalition, didn’t have to battle that ethic to begin with like “Oh my god, they did screw us over.” That was a big public thing to admit like we got screwed. It’s a hard thing to admit and say out loud and act accordingly. So, when the company comes and says we want to build you a Jack Nicholas golf course. We’re just going to cover those sediments. You say okay. Clark Fork Coalition says it’s a cover-up not cleanup. They say go back to Missoula. Now they’re pissed, and they should be but not at us.

So, part of the reason we were successful with this effort in Missoula because it is Missoula. People come here to engage in place. They care about their rivers. They care about open space. There is just sort of ethic of we are blessed and fortunate to live here, we ought to take care of it. Part of that, I think, was... come from the business community. We all used to turn our backs, literally, turn our backs on our buildings on rivers. There was in the ’70s and ’80s, this effort for Missoula to re-engage with this river that runs right through the town. And develop the river so that people could engage with it. So, we got Caras Park that is, you know, the hub of activity all summer long right in the middle of our downtown. People saw it as an asset to the downtown business community. Then all of the sudden it is not just about, I think it is pretty, and I like to fish. It’s this asset. It’s an economic asset. Missoula saw that early. So going to the business community to talk about cleanup at Milltown was a natural build on everything Downtown Missoula had done to reengage with the river. It didn’t seem freakish. You could talk about it in economic terms and people wouldn’t think...you know... it was obvious that you could talk about it in economic terms as well. I think that is part of it. A huge part of it is, we were never owned by the mining company. We just weren’t. That’s a huge difference.

DB: So that makes me think that a lot of our discussion and a lot of the discussion about the removal of the Milltown Dam is actually about Missoula and what happened in Missoula.
Where’s Milltown in all of this? What was your engagement with actual Milltown and people there? How do they fit into the story?

TSM: That’s a huge part of the story and one of the pivotal, like ’96 ice jam on the list. ARCO was smart enough to engage Bonner and Milltown. The communities are so very close together that they really are one but separate identities. And so, completely funded something called the Bonner Development Group. The Bonner Development Group became the local voice for ARCO about, “Wait a second, wait a second those people…” They tried to make it a Missoula versus Us thing. “Those people want to take away our reservoir.” You know, it is a Superfund site. It’s not like it’s chain link fences with big signs that said stay out. It was beautiful. It was a beautiful reservoir with its blue herons, bald eagles, and calm water. I mean, pretty to go walk around. It was just this little oasis right next to I-90 that you didn’t really realize I-90 was there. The Bonner Development had a lot of push back. We at the Clark Fork Coalition engaged pretty immediately in the local communities early. I will never forget this; we had a little community meeting at the Two Rivers, the restaurant there. We thought, okay we are going to buy some pie and have coffee and give a little presentation about…I stood right up and said, “I want you to hear it from the horse’s mouth, not from the newspaper, but why we want to do this in your community.” It was brutal. There was all these angry questions coming at us that we A, answered and B, deflected as much as we could with humor. At one point, I realized I’m standing, the meeting is just about over, and no one has touched the pie. I am standing literally between the audience, and the pie is behind me just sort of the way... I finally sort of step out of way and said, “Seriously, it’s going to kill me if you guys don’t eat some of this pie.” Then they all laughed came over and had pie. One guy came over to me and said, “I know I just gave you a hard time. I just felt like you know it’s important to us. I just had to give you a hard time. But, you took it pretty well.” Like they are test, test, test, push, push, push.

When the county decided it was going to have a resolution. County was not a decision-maker. But, it could formally do a resolution to support removal. It had a big ol’ public meeting and hearing at the school in Bonner. The place was packed! A lot of angry people! One guy, Bob, I thought he was going to have a heart attack. He was so angry. I mean, veins sticking out of his head. His face was really red. I actually addressed him in front of the whole crowd and said it’s not worth it. I’m worried about you. It’s not worth this amount of anger. We have different opinions and different ideas. So when you sort of brought it down, over and over, keep bring it down to a human level, that helped.

The other thing that was critical and kicked it across the finish line was Friends of Two Rivers formed. Finally, community members that said Bonner Development Group and ARCO do not speak for us. So they formed their own group to engage community and try to... and have sort of a different vent. Like that community is proud of its history, so they really wanted to
preserve history and have the cleanup be part of that history and have be a way to be able to
tell their story. So Gary, Judy Metz, and Chuck and Mary Erickson led that... headed that up. It
gave... it all of the sudden made it the public story and not be the locals oppose it. So all the
sudden the “he said, she said” was to Two Rivers and BDG, no longer Missoula and BDG. Huge!
They wanted to a... I mean, Gary and Judy were members of the Clark Fork Coalition. I called
them up and said, you know, they wanted to do a mailer to everybody. It was going to cost
$140 or something, to everybody in their community. I said, “I will happily write that check,
happily! But, I don’t think you want me to. Right, Bonner Development Group is getting tens of
thousands of dollars from ARCO and that will seem equivalent with this $140 check from the
Clark Fork Coalition. So it’s yours if you want it. I just don’t know that you want it.” They were
like “Yeah, you’re right. We don’t want it.” We tried to stay out of their way as much as
possible. Help them where they needed help, but basically stay out of the way. Gary at one
point, called me up and said, “You have pissed off our community.” I said, “Ahh... How?”
Because we had a billboard in Missoula that had a picture of the dam that said something like,
“Not all time bombs tick.” That, apparently really upset folks out there. Like wait a minute,
you’re saying that we’re... We’re basically saying to a community, “You are a liability” “You are a
time bomb.” This is...That was before 2001 so before the whole terrorist event, but still
offensive. I said, “Okay, we will take it down. We are paid through the end of the month, and
we won’t re-up it.”

That kind of feedback really helped. His ability to distance himself from the Clark Fork Coalition
and say, “It pissed me off too and I called them.” helped them. Then... Todd O’Hare who was
the chief policy adviser to Governor Martz understood... He is the guy who got Judy to go where
she went. He understood she needed to do it because she had messed up in Libby. The state
has the ability to use something called a Silver Bullet under EPA to fast track it. She was worried
about using the Silver Bullet like “My god, what if something else worse happens?” Worse than
two hundred dead people? She blew it and was taking all kinds of hits for blowing it. I think
Todd saw Milltown as a way to do something right with EPA and sort of regain some the
mistakes she had made. He also understood it couldn’t be Missoula asking. So he invited Two
River... Friends of Two Rivers to go meet with the Governor so that she understood. She had a
local group to hide behind. She invited them to the State of the State. She felt badly for Bruce.
She said, “I know that Bruce and Bonner Development Group have been really opposing this.
But you need to know, there is local support for this not Missoula, but local support.” Really
smart on Todd’s part, really smart.

DB: Do you have any sense of what the breakdown of local support was? I mean, Friends of Two
Rivers comes out as the winning group. But, did they have a majority of support? Is it fair to
speak of majority support in Milltown?

Tracy Stone-Manning Interview, OH 428-003, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library,
University of Montana-Missoula.
TSM: Pretty small sample size, right? I don’t know. I would ask them. I mean... they... I think so because the other EPA totally stepped up to the plate and started something like the Milltown Redevelopment Group and funded the sort of the facilitation of it. The decision had not been made, but the writing was on the wall that the dam was coming to come out. But, it was a local group to sort of say, “Okay, so what... after remediation and restoration, what do we in vision for this place? How best can the community engage?” One of the recommendations was to create a community council which they did, community did. The first... The ability to vote, that’s the only ability, you could actually take a metric and look at “Was there support.” The council was...when it was first elected, had the majority of council people were people who were supportive of dam removal. So, if that’s a metric that’s...then yes. It swung at one point and then went, you know as community councils are want to do. But, I would ask Gary or Judy that question. I think mostly that people... I think they just weren’t engaging. They didn’t feel right that Missoula was the one speaking for them. They also thought ARCO is not speaking for us either. So Friends of Two Rivers gave them a way to engage. They were as civil as it comes and as a community-based. It was all about their community. I was on the Milltown Redevelopment Working Group. I was one of those because they were stake holders from around the county. But, I stayed away from Friends of Two River intentionally. They are doing god’s work. They don’t need my appearance and if they need my help, they will call. It worked. Yeah, they are lovely people incredible people.

DB: So what about other people that opposed to it. I mean you have talked a lot about all the support from different sides who opposed it? I mean, who did you get...who did run up the most?

TSM: Bruce. Bruce was the most...

DB: That’s Bruce Hall from..?

TSM: Bruce Hall, Bonner Development Group was the most obvious opponent, partly made so by the media. Tracy Culp(?) was... Couple things happened there. One, he and I did so many side-by-side presentations that I’d go to know him and joke with him. He didn’t like me but I could joke with him. I could be like ‘I am going to give Bruce’s presentation tonight, and he is going to give mine because we got each other down.” But one time, I had a tail light out in my car, and we were going into meeting. He is walking into a meeting, and he says, “Your back right tail light is out.” I said, “Oh, thanks Bruce.” So, I went and got it fixed, but it turns out there was a short. It sort of immediately went out again. It just became this thing I supposedly fixed, but I hadn’t fixed...I needed to replace a whole tail light. It was one of those things that fell to the bottom of the “to do” list. So seven or eight months later, I was at another meeting, and Bruce said, “I was behind you in traffic the other day and turned to my,” we know each other well...

Tracy Stone-Manning Interview, OH 428-003, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
enough that we know each other’s cars right, like not going to the same meeting, just behind you in traffic, “I was behind you in traffic the other day and I turned to my wife and I was like ‘God damn it! She won’t even listen to me about a tail light!’” (Laughs)

TSM: I thought it was A: fabulous that he told me that story and B: I was like, “No Bruce really, I did! I got it! I fixed it, but there’s a short, and I haven’t fixed that. But no, I went right in and fixed it after you told me my tail light as out.” “God damn it, she won’t even listen me about a tail light.”(Laughs)

TSM: It was so funny and also showed me that he was making it personal as well. Then something personal happened to him. His son got into a really bad ski accident. So, there were ... people sent checks to... the whole sort of community fundraising thing. He just disengaged. He talked about learning about priorities. I said, “Yeah of course, of course.” It was just sort of a lesson of like “Wait minute, there are way bigger things.” His son almost died. He was different after that. Then he just sort of slipped away. I had always hoped there would be this graceful space for him to once the decision was made, he was still invited, invited to the Milltown Development Working group, invited to engage even though he “lost.” He just didn’t.

DB: Did anyone from Bonner Development Group?

TSM: Yup, yup, yup.

DB: So they continued to play a part in restoration and redevelopment?

TSM: Yeah, in the whole, absolutely, but not Bruce. I think he took it too personally. He just couldn’t do it. So you know, fair enough.

DB: So how about the Clark Fork Coalition’s future once the dam was coming down, once it did come down, how did the Coalition change after this major push? In a lot ways most people around here identify the Clark Fork Coalition with that fight? What’s become of it? How did the Milltown Dam Campaign impact the group or its emphasis or did it?

TSM: Yeah, also a question for Karen Knudsen, the director now. But I... We had people... I had people ask me like, “So what are you going to do now?” I was like, “What are you talking about?” “Well, what job you looking for now that the Coalition is going away?” I was, “The Coalition isn’t going away! There is so much work to do. Are you kidding me?” So part of what we did was engage in the upper river. We bought a ranch and said, “Okay, so we all have been pushing for twenty years for cleanup of this river. The Clark Fork Coalition has said for twenty years that you can have cleanup, and you can have cows, and we better damn well make sure that is right. We better [find out} ourselves.” There was plenty of eye-rolling as there should have been.

Tracy Stone-Manning Interview, OH 428-003, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
But what we wanted to be able to do was to be able to experiment. We couldn’t ask people up there, “Hey, why don’t you start niche marketing your cows or why don’t you experiment with keeping your cows off the river?” We couldn’t ask people to play with their bottom line. A, we didn’t have enough trust and B, that’s disrespectful. “Hey, can we mess with your books, you know.” But, we could play with our own, and just have that over-the-fence watching that happens. Then we could also learn from reality what are the obstacles of trying run a business when you got backhoes on your property digging up sediment?

So, our whole point was we went to the EPA and said “We know you got to treat us differently because of the criteria of who you pay attention to like we are a stake holder. We own four miles of river, and you can push the envelope on our property. You want to experiment and not get pushed back, that’s us. So go wild, mess up on our property! Learn on property so that you can take what you have learned there with a very willing land owner to properties where the land owner is not so willing.” So there was that... That is all sort of quiet work. But, the next obvious phase, I thought, for the Coalition was okay so now that we are getting the cleanup, how do we ensure the cleanup A works and B lasts, and C. For A and B to be true, it means C has had to happen which is getting community buy-in. So that the community sees that this cleanup, this asset is just that. It’s an asset for them. They are engaged in keeping it working. Fifty-six river miles can be rebuilt and $120 million can be spent, and it all can be undone in three seasons with cows, just undone. How... and not knowingly and not even so antagonistically just, it could happen. Our whole thing was this cleanup could be, could propel the community, the whole valley into a new place.

It’s scary because the incredibly beautiful Deer Lodge Valley had not been developed because in part, it has been a Superfund site. That’s about to change. A hundred million bucks has been spent. We are going to have trout in the river. We already have trout now, but that’s kind of a secret. There’s no... it used to be that the company was in charge. There is no company now. There is a vacuum of leadership. We said to the community, “We want you to drive. There is a vacuum of leadership, and now you get to create who and what you are going to be as a valley.” We worked with the local watershed group to help build them so they could take that leadership role. We did a whole community-visioning process of what you want to be. We invited the community to come to Fairmont. I love this, offered to put them up for a night. You know, feed them dinner and put them up for a night even though you could drive to make it home because it was a two-day meeting. It was like this little, mini vacation. People were so excited to, you know, brought the Mrs. and spent the night at Fairmont and really engaged. But when we, I love this story, when we first went to the community leaders to ask them like, “We can’t be the ones, the Clark Fork Coalition can’t drive. We can’t. We can help build, support, shape, catalyze, broker. We cannot be driving. We want you to step and lead, and help the community.” Because now, there is this threat. I am saying this to Ron Hansen who was the

Tracy Stone-Manning Interview, OH 428-003, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
planner in Powell County. Half of Ron’s salary was paid by ARCO. Ron fought the Clark Fork Coalition and cleanup. Brilliant on ARCO’s part, right, brilliant. Like, “You are going to need a planner because there’s this cleanup coming. We’ll pay for him.” The county and Ron fought cleanup hard, long and hard, fought us, fought cleanup. They lose. Cleanup is coming. We go to Ron and say, Ron is also really smart, “This change is coming. The community can drive or not. We need your help. We need your help in helping the community drive. We are worried about the change that is going to come as a result of this cleanup.” Ron looks at me and he says, “Are you familiar with the term irony?” (Laughs)

TSM: I was like, “Yes Ron, I am.” (Laughs) “I could see how you could think this is ironic because it is. But the point of the fact is the community is going to change and you can drive or not.” Of course, he did. He helped us shape that process. So, I think that’s the future of the Clark Fork Coalition, using the cleanup that we all fought so hard for as a spring board towards community development. It’s that incredible, beautiful intersection between conservation and economy, and how do we ensure the two intersect appropriately and to the community’s benefit. If twenty years from now the community looks back and says that cleanup was the best thing ever happened to us, its total victory. Then they make decisions as a community based on their assets. Total victory. I think that’s the direction that the coalition is going.

We were able to grow as a result, financially grow as result of the Milltown campaign. Partly as a result of the Milltown campaign and people saying, “Well, are you going... are guys going to shut down?” There was that question out there. There was the real fact of ridiculously raising...rising rents in downtown Missoula. So, we decided we better buy a building so that we can show the community, no, we are here. There is a lot of work to do. We are here for the long haul. We want to stay in downtown so that means we have to buy a building. So that was pretty obvious physical way to show the community no, no, no we are not done. That is just a great success story for us and for the whole community. But, we are not done. There are other things to do. That, I think helped make people realize oh no, no they’re literally here.

DB: So I mean there is one thing to gage by the fact that three-fourths of the cars have bumper stickers that were free. It’s another to say who is supporting you, you know financially. After the removal decision and a lot of that work is starting to happen, the Clark Fork Coalition goes and buys four miles ranch land along the river and a building. Where did that growth financially come from or where did that financial growth come from?

TSM: The ranch came from remarkable set of partners, two remarkable guys. One of them, Don King, is a realist. His money come from having been a, not a real estate investor why am not coming up with the terminology, but basically a real estate investor, yeah I guess. Not like a broker, not a realtor, but he ran a real estate investment firm that was bought by Deutsche
Bank. He was going to retire when Deutsche Bank bought his company. Instead Deutsche Bank made him the head of Global Real Estate Investment which he did for a year or so. Then he fully retired. He is a member of the Clark Fork Coalition and I as you are supposed to do, you get to know your donors and we became friends. I saw this ranch opportunity as not only a way to really programmatically do what we needed to do, but just a kick-ass investment. It was twenty-three hundred acres for 1.2 give or take ish, 1.2 I can’t remember now, million dollars, four river miles both... 3 ½ river miles, both banks. Okay, after the cleanup happens, this ranch is going to be worth more than that. It just is.

I was pitching to the Board in the middle of a recession after the 2001 slump. Non-profits took a hit because remember the economy took a hit after 9/11. So we’re ... I’m dipping into our reserves for operating money and saying to the Board, “I want to buy a ranch!” It was awesome. (Laughs) They were like, can I have some of what you’re smoking. But, it makes so much sense financially. We could have used, potentially could used Natural Resource Damage claim money to help pay for the ranch by putting conversion easements on to it. So you know, you are buying down a huge percentage of it. The idea was buy the ranch, do all the program work, Superfund work, put easements on it which are going to help pay for the ranch, then in ten, fifteen years sell it, and be sitting on your endowment, right. That’s the way to get the Coalition in endowment. That was too big for the Board to hear when we were dipping into some operational reserves to run the office. So, I went to Don and laid out the...he made all of his money on real estate investments, laid out the deal. I said, “Here’s my problem Don. I’m going to run a capital campaign, and I’m going to go to people like you and say, ‘Would you donate?’ And you’re going to say, ‘Yeah, I don’t want to donate. I want in.’” He said, “Yeah, you’re right.” So, he lays out a deal for me that I could not refuse that took all the financial risk away for the Coalition. Then, enabled the Board...I thought okay now I am going to understand if my Board is programmatically uncomfortable with where we want to go because it’s real...that’s a real question to have. Should we be doing this? If it was programmatically that they’re concerned with or financially because I have just taken all the finances away. The way I did that was Don said, “Why don’t I buy the ranch? I’ll donate a $100,000 to you, the Coalition. We will create a partnership to buy the ranch together. You will be a 1/16 owner, whatever it was, not... a ... 12% or something at the time. You’ll be a 12% owner. You’ll be the managing partner. We go through the whole cleanup. I buy you out at market value when the cleanup is done.” So, you give us money to become your partner, then you buy us out. Ahhh, yeah. The answer is yeah. There is no financial risk for us, zero. An unbelievable gift!

He was the hardest person to call to say I was leaving the Coalition; all my colleagues, piece of cake, Board Chair, piece of cake, Don, hard phone call. Because that was... I mean he had a personal relationship with me right. Obviously, he trusted the Coalition, but he was making a deal with me, and couple years later I am out. So, that’s how we did the financial piece of that...
which is to say no skin, no skin of the game that was given to us. Financially, there was no down side. Capital campaign for the building, different story, but also was pretty clear that we penciled it out and said okay, we need to run a capital for X amount of dollars at fifty percent of X it pencils. Servicing the debt becomes the same as our rent was. We knew we could raise fifty percent, and we did it all locally. That was just people in the community who care about us. The lead gifts were $100,000 each for two different individuals. I think, if I recall right, the capital campaign was $800,000 the building was 6. We padded the capital...the campaign because anytime you’re raising a capital campaign, raising ops is hard. So, we knew with that operation we would have to buffer a little bit for operations and then you know, sort of, O and M pot of money for overtime to pay property taxes and stuff like that. I am trying to remember if any... We didn’t get any huge chunks of money from foundations. It was all people in Missoula who care about us. It was very quick. I left in the middle of that capital campaign, not even in the middle, three quarters of the way through. By the time I left, it was already penciling. We moved in August and by January it already made more financial sense then paying rent to somebody.

DB: So in any of this, has the Clark Fork Coalition been a model for other environmental organizations, conservation organizations, and community organizations, whatever you are comfortable calling them...

TSM: I hope so.

DB: Did you ever get calls; people come in to say how are you doing this? What are you doing? We want to model this?

TSM: Yeah, yeah. I mean certainly funders and foundations noticing and saying like what are the... People... That’s why I said I am so glad you are writing this down because people kept saying like okay there is best practices here. We should be writing them down. We were in the throes of it. We all understood, we should be writing them down. We were not writing them down. We were day by day taking incoming and doing out going on this campaign. But yeah, I hope so. I think... I think John Tester hiring me is part of that story, right. That... I mean he told me. I didn’t know him very well. I didn’t apply. They called me. He said, “I just really appreciate how you brought people together to work together, and that’s what I need to do.” So, that is a success story. I joke about it. I’m like, “Really, you’re hiring a known environmentalist!” But, that’s part of the success story. Brian Schweitzer put me on the short list to, I am not saying this from my ego, I am saying it to... because it... He put me short list for director of DEQ when he was elected. I knew I wasn’t going get the job, but I was incredibly flattered. I went through the process because we used to always joke at the Clark Fork Coalition about like, they don’t let us sit at the grownup table. You remember the kids’ table at Thanksgiving? Like those
environmentalists, they are sitting at the kids’ table? You know, we are really smart. We need to be at the grownups table. And that’s the grown up table. So, it showed a great among of respect and trust for that organization that elected officials to say I’m going to pluck from there. That’s huge! And... so yeah. I mean I hope others see it as a... because that is a little bit out of that corner of “ists,” not fully out. Because we still make jokes about known environmentalists, right. But, it’s a step of the way out which is really important.

DB: So, what else? I mean, I have sort of asked the questions I’ve thought of. What am I... What are we missing? What else is in the story that you really think needs to be out there?

TSM: Well, you know what, I might go back if I were you and ask Karen, I don’t even these files exist anymore still. We couldn’t afford polling, but we worked with the Social Work Department [at the university]. So, our Board... On the Board was Susan Reed. Fred Reed was her husband. She worked at the Social Work Department. So we got...it was like a class assignment to learn how to do... to conduct research. So they did a poll for us. It helped us realize from the very beginning that nobody knows what the word Superfund means. We use it all the time. Nobody has any idea what it means. It helped us shape how we talked about the issue. I mean, we wanted the basic, “Would you support removal of Milltown Dam?” But what we really wanted was, “Do you know where it is?” (Laughs)

TSM: a lot of people had no idea, right. So we realized, “Oh gosh, we need to start from scratch.” People don’t understand what Superfund is. We think that they have Superfund fatigue. Well, they do in these very specific communities who are dealing with the cleanup. But, nobody else knows even what the word means. We stopped calling it a Superfund site and started calling it a hazardous waste site. Things like that. Then a couple years later, they did a sort of follow-up. I think it was almost all the same questions to see how we moved people. I remember that we moved them, but I...It might be worth your time sort of see if that still exists.

DB: So that reminded me of changing people’s minds, of moving people, educating people. And really, Milltown Dam was not an enormous dam as far as dams go in this country.

TSM: No.

DB: Is it a step in some direction of dam removal or is... you know... is it a local story, did a lot for the community, a lot for the economy in the long run, potentially. But, does it fit into a bigger story?

TSM: I think it does fit into a bigger story. Twofold, one, about Superfund cleanup itself, sort of going the distance for Superfund cleanup. But, two, precisely because it happened under President Bush who said this will not happen on my watch, I think that’s part of the story. I mean, people were certainly looking from around the country. The New York Times covered it,

Tracy Stone-Manning Interview, OH 428-003, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
The Washington Post covered it. It was a chapter in a book, it was... I mean... It’s been a story that has been told in the larger dam, dams and rivers story with the acknowledgment of, pretty small dam. Medium-sized, not tiny, medium. Our adversaries... NPR did a piece about it on “All Things Considered” in the middle of the campaign. Sandy Stash said on air, said in the tape, “I think this all just part of a bigger... this is part of a bigger effort to take out the Snake River Dams.” She’s trying to make it the boogey man. I was like, “(laughs) I wish! But no.” (Laughs) Like thanks for giving us that power, no! She was... you know... she tied it together as the boogey man, right.

I’ll never forget. Kathy Witkowsky, the...was working a (?) for NPR then. Do you know her?

DB: I don’t, no.

TSM: She lives in Missoula, and she turned off the tape and she said, after she interviewed me, and then she was like basically, “Let’s go off the record. You don’t really think you’re going to a...you don’t really think you’re going to win on this do you?” I’m like, “Yeah. What I just said to you on the record is the same that I would say off”. She was like, “There’s just no possible way you can go up against ARCO is there?” I went, “Yeah.” (Laughs) It was one of those moments where I realized like people think we are crazy! You know, because it is a David and Goliath story.

DB: Right, I said I was done with questions, but that makes me think. So when did you know it was going to come down. When did you know it was going to win? Was there a moment when you came home, “It’s time to open this bottle of champagne”.

TSM: This is so goofy. I wish I could remember when it was in... on the calendar between 2000 and 2003. I am not a New Agey person. I fell partly asleep and had an audio dream. There were no visual, and it was the confluence. I woke up and I said to Dick, my husband, “Like, oh my god it is going to happen.” He just looks at me and said, “Dreams don’t mean anything Tracy”. But, I don’t know. It was a personal like... I ... I had enough intellectual signs that emotionally, I let myself understand and believe that it absolutely was going to happen. I can’t remember when that was.

DB: What do you mean by “it was the confluence”?

TSM: I understood in this dream that had no visuals that the audio that I was listening to was the confluence of the Blackfoot and Clark Fork Rivers—un-dammed. Like it was rushing water, and I knew...I woke up and it was like I just listened to the confluence of the Blackfoot and Clark Fork Rivers. It’s going to happen. I am not that person. (Laughs) I am just not that person, but I fundamentally knew then. Then I had little signs along the way of you know like, oh, you know. But, the time...But, I’m also so much so, not that person that there was not champagne until
Judy Martz said in her State of the State. Then there was champagne. Oh, the EPA hasn’t made its decision yet. But, whatever, they are going to. We had champagne then too. But that was... Sherry Devlin called me that afternoon and said, “If you repeat this to anyone, I am going to kill you. But, I am afraid I am not going to find you tonight.” I was like, “What are you talking about Sherry.” She said, “Let me read to you what the Governor is going to say in her State of the State. And I need a comment.” She reads it me. And I say, “I have the wherewithal to say. I need call you back in three minutes.” Hang up the phone, stare at my desk, close the door, and call her back. Say what I am supposed to say which is thanking the Governor, right. It sounded like she was reading...and I am sure the person that wrote the speech went to the Clark Fork Coalition’s website, I mean... it... they were our words. It sounded like she was reading off our website. So, I am calm, and I actually do what she asks me to do. My dear comrades in arms, my dear friends and colleagues... I don’t tell them. I just, I just go to their office and say “Whatever you do, don’t miss the State of the State tonight.” They are like, “What?” “Just whatever you do, don’t miss the State of the State.” That was... that tipped it enough there. “What she going to say?” “I can’t say.”(laughs)

DB: So that’s when the Coalition knew, at the State of the State.

TSM: Absolutely! I mean... then that night I was at home listening to NPR, listening to the governor say those words, and I was like screaming like a banshee. That was the pop the champagne moment.

DB: Great, well I appreciate all your time and remembrance of this.

TSM: Yeah absolutely. If you have any follow-ups, I so wish I would have kept a journal now just for really specific like, (snapping) things.

DB: When you had that dream. (laughs)

TSM: (laughs) Exactly, when I had that dream.

[End of Interview]