

## Western Shoshone Defense Project

### Timeline of Shoshone Cattle Seizure, September 2002

#### **Thursday, 9-19-2002**

Western Shoshone Defense Projects staff members returned to the WSDP office in the evening to find an anonymous message on the answering machine: "The BLM is attempting to compound/impound your cattle this weekend. If you have anything on the range you'd better get it off." Calls were immediately made to contacts and supporters of the Dann family, as well as the Eureka County Sheriff's Department.

#### **Friday, 9-20-2002**

Early Friday morning supporters began arriving in Crescent Valley (approx. 60 miles southwest of Elko, NV), including Shoshone cowboys from the Yomba reservation in central Nevada who, along with Dann family members, immediately left for the mountains on horseback to begin bringing the animals onto Dann property.

Press releases and action alerts were sent out and various media sources began calling in for the story. By Friday evening as the cowboys brought the first group of cows down the mountainside, the WSDP office received a phone call from a second anonymous tipster. This caller spent ten minutes on the phone with WSDP staff and provided more details, claiming to have definite information that the BLM would be setting up camp in Pine Valley by 10:00 a.m. Sunday and was planning to stay through Wednesday. (Pine Valley is to the east of Crescent Valley, on the other side of the Cortez mountain range where most of the animals were grazing.)

#### **Saturday, 9-21-2002**

WSDP staff and supporters were up early watching for any activity in the valley as Shoshone and other Indian and non-Indian supporters continued to arrive from throughout Nevada and as far away as San Francisco, CA and Albuquerque, NM. Late that morning as the Dannels' grandchildren Tyson (24) and Stephanie (10) attempted to round up the Dannels' saddlehorses, a BLM helicopter appeared and flew low over their heads, scattering the horses. A complaint against this action was filed with the Eureka County Sheriff's Department by Carrie Dann. An Associated Press article, *Dann sisters prepare for cattle seizure*, was carried on the front page of the Elko Daily Free Press. Cowboys on horseback and ATVs continued to herd Dann cattle towards the ranch and all those gathered at the WSDP base camp and office prepared themselves for the next morning, most getting little or no sleep.

#### **Sunday, 9-22-2002**

Shortly after 4 a.m. Western Shoshone volunteers and their supporters encountered twenty plus armed BLM Rangers in about as many vehicles at the mouth of Cottonwood Canyon in Pine Valley. They were not able to reach the WSDP office until 4:30, at which point the Dann Ranch and the WSDP base camp were informed. Shortly after 6 a.m. the WSDP office received a call from a supporter near the Buckhorn mine, south of Cottonwood Canyon in Pine Valley. They had also encountered BLM rangers. At this point the BLM began to remove all observers from Pine Valley, escorted out by armed agents. There was no further contact with the office until almost 8:00 a.m. On their way out of Pine Valley (headed toward Carlin, NV) more BLM Ranger vehicles were seen entering the valley along with cattle trucks and private rigs belonging to J & J Oil in Vernal, Utah. Nevada State BLM Director Robert Abbey and Elko District Manager Helen Hankins were at the tail end of the convoy. Throughout this time, BLM agents refused to identify themselves and named irrelevant sections of the Code of Federal Regulations as the statutes that were being enforced.

At 7 a.m. Carrie Dann's daughter, Patricia Paul, arrived at the mouth of Cottonwood Canyon on the Crescent Valley side and was denied access to the road by 3 armed BLM agents. WSDP staff immediately notified the Eureka County Sheriff's Department (ECSD), as this is a county road, not subject to closure by federal officials without County approval or a court order. By 7:30 a.m. the Sheriff was on the phone

trying to resolve the situation and those supporters still in the WSDP basecamp had started a prayer ceremony. After 8:00 the WSDP office had re-established contact with supporters in Pine Valley, including Western Shoshone National Council Chief Raymond Yowell. Around 8:30 the office received reports of a white and yellow BLM helicopter that had begun buzzing up and down the mountains, driving small groups of cows in front of it. The helicopter was reported to be less than ten feet above the cattle, driving cows at a full run.

Shortly before 9:00 a.m. the WSDP office received a phone call from the ECSD dispatcher stating the Sheriff Ken Jones had reported the Cottonwood Canyon road was open for public use. However, despite the continued efforts of the ECSD, Western Shoshones and their supporters (including Carrie Dann) were denied access to Cottonwood Canyon and other county roads throughout most of the day. The Associated Press and other media were told that afternoon by the BLM that no roads had been closed and no cattle were being rounded up. Video and photographic documentation, as well as many eyewitness statements, contradicted this claim.

At one point WSDP supporters overheard a BLM radio transmission suggesting that one of the supporters in Pine Valley had drawn a pistol. WSDP office staff immediately relayed the information to Sheriff Ken Jones, asking him to communicate with the BLM that all Western Shoshones and their supporters were unarmed and that the WSDP has always had a policy of NO guns, drugs or alcohol. All BLM Rangers were armed and at least some of them were wearing bulletproof vests. WSDP staff and volunteers were concerned that, despite our efforts, a violent incident could erupt from BLM overzealousness.

In the early afternoon, members of the Nevada Committee for Full Statehood flew over the area in a small airplane to assess the situation and reported back to the WSDP office. Among other things, they observed that, contrary to the BLM's claims of overgrazing by the Danns ("It's nothing but dirt and weeds out there" – Joe Simpson, BLM spokesperson, Reno, NV), the area was green and lush compared to other ranges and grazing allotments in the area. The cattle rounded up, both by the BLM and the Danns' supporters was also observed to be fat and well-fed.

Throughout the afternoon Western Shoshones and their supporters were denied access to Pine Valley, despite repeated attempts by Eureka County Sheriff Ken Jones to open county roads. Finally by 4:30 or 5:00 p.m., Carrie Dann had been escorted by the BLM through Cottonwood Canyon (at speeds of less than ten miles per hour) just in time to see the last of the cattle being loaded onto trucks. The BLM had succeeded in rounding up 227 head of cattle, at enormous cost to the taxpayers and in defiance of national and international law.

### **Monday, 9-23-02**

Monday morning Western Shoshones and their supporters were up early once again, watching for any activity. Reports from Pine Valley indicated most of the BLM Rangers and cattle trucks had left the area but a small force still remained near the holding pens that had been set up the day before. The BLM stated to both media contacts and the ECSD that they were through rounding up livestock for the time being, but promised to come back eventually for the horses, as well as any cattle that was re-released onto the range. Nevertheless, the WSDP office remained on high alert, not being sure how much of what the BLM said could be trusted.

Meanwhile, news of the roundup on Sunday had spread through radio, television and press coverage, as well as over the internet to networks of supporters across the country and around the world. At 7:30 a.m. the Nevada BLM offices opened for business and Western Shoshone supporters began calling in with comments and complaints, calling as well the offices of Nevada Senator Harry Reid and other members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, to discuss S958, the Western Shoshone Claims Distribution Act, which, if passed, would forcibly distribute Claims money the Western Shoshone have refused to accept for over two decades.

### **Tuesday, 9-24-02**

By Tuesday morning most of the supporters who had volunteered their time and energy for the weekend had left Crescent Valley, headed for home. A plane that was spotted over the Cortez Range in the early afternoon gave everyone a good scare, but reports from Pine Valley indicated that the only remnants of the BLM operation were the porta-potties and the damage done to the land and the roads by BLM vehicles, heavy trucks and ATVs. BLM personnel attempted to reach the Danns ranch around 2:00 p.m. to deliver a

Notice of Sale and an inventory of the cattle seized, to be auctioned off in Reno on October 4. Western Shoshones and their supporters met the Rangers at the road near the WSDP basecamp, forcing them to walk the remaining quarter mile to the ranch, where Carrie Dann refused to be served any kind of paperwork. This meeting was also documented on video.

**Wednesday, 9-25-02**

S958 passed through the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs without a single objection.