State Department of Geology and Mineral Industries

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REPORTED URANIUM IN THE VICINITY OF WILHOIT SPRINGS Clackamas County

Claims: Claims were staked by at least 36 residents of the Salem area - Mr. Lester Johnson is the only named claim holder.

Location: T. 6 S., R. 2 E., on the Wilhoit Springs road. Claims have been located both east and west of the spring resort area.

Development: Newspaper reports indicate over 30 holes were drilled, however not all holes were inspected. These tests were supposedly drilled to a depth of 30 to 40 feet.

General geology: The Molalla quadrangle was mapped by Harper (1946) who described the Butte Creek beds in this area and indicated their age to be Oligocene or lower Miocene. The Butte Creek beds are marine to the west of the area and contain a macrofauna comparable to that of the Illahe (Eugene) formation in the Salem quadrangle, however the fact that this formation interfingers with or dips beneath terrestrial beds immediately to the east of Wilhoit Springs is indicated by the occurrence of lignite coal of sufficient quantity to be mined.

Harper (1946) has mapped the lava immediately to the east of the coal mine as the pre-Butte Creek lavas of Eocene age. The writer has observed Cascade andesites (Pliocene) capping the same ridge, but whether these lavas cap the pre-Butte Creek lavas or the Butte Creek formation has not been determined since Eocene lavas do crop out over a wide area a short distance north of Wilhoit Springs.

The east-dipping sediments in the coal mine area would suggest that they continue beneath the lavas which in that case could not be Eocene. Another

interesting fact is that part of the Molalla formation cropping out on the east side of this lava ridge has coal seams and a flora thought by some to be Oligo-Miocene age, which might suggest the correlation of upper Butte Creek coal producing beds with part of the Molalla formation.

West and south of the subject area the Butte Creek marine beds are capped by Columbia River lava of middle Miocene age.

The narrow valleys and relatively undissected uplands indicate the area is the youthful stage of erosional development.

Mineralisation: No mineralization is reported for this area, however the coal has been reported to carry a very low concentration of U_3O_8.

Observations: Where drill holes could be located, cuttings were checked for radioactivity with the scintillator, however no count above background of 0.075 mR/hr could be detected.

The uranium find in this area was probably the result of a reported pitchblende sample displayed by an unnamed prospector who stated that he found it in a creek bed near Wilhoit. The local residents recall the sample's high radioactivity as detected by a Geiger counter, which indicates it may have been pitchblende undoubtedly from another area, probably out of State. The owner of the Wilhoit coal mine said he was approached by an unnamed person who asked him to cooperate by verifying the occurrence of uranium in the coal mine and also to proclaim the good possibilities of pitchblende for the area. He was told he could become rich if he cooperated, but he says he told everyone who asked him that there was no chance for pitchblende in this area. It seems likely that this may have been a stock promotion try, although at this date no stock is known to have been sold.

Conclusions: Background count of 0.075 mR/hr is possibly slightly higher than normal, but no readings above background could be detected in the drill

holes or from scattered cuttings. The drill brought up what appeared to be weathered Butte Creek shale and clayey sand of light tan color and a few seams of black carbonaceous material. There is no evidence to substantiate any commercial uranium in the Wilhoit Springs area, and it is doubtful if further exploration will prove otherwise.

Report by: H. G. Schlicker.

Visited: September 20, 1955

Reference: Harper, Herbert E., Geology of the Molalla quadrangle, Oregon, unpublished Master's thesis, Oregon State College, 1946.