

In celebration of John Muir's descendants' donation of his papers to the University of the Pacific

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(Delivered April 13, 2019, at University of the Pacific, Stockton, California, at the [2019 John Muir Legacy Fair and Celebration.](#))

It is a great honor to be here with you on this glorious day.. Before I start, I would like to ask the [Sierra Club](#) volunteers from the local [Delta-Sierra Group](#) (who helped with today's event) and from [Sierra Club California](#), as well as the Sierra Club staff with us today to please raise their hands. You may see many of them tomorrow at the Earth Day Celebration here in town.

It is an honor to be here with Muir family members who have generously donated his [papers](#) to the University of the Pacific so they can be preserved and shared. Earlier today, I had the opportunity to see the collection and was incredibly moved. To hold a letter from President Theodore Roosevelt to John Muir about the famous camping trip, was an amazing experience.

I am also honored to be here with Pacific University leaders and with Curator Wurtz. When John Muir founded the Sierra Club in 1892, he did so to inspire more people to experience, fall in love with and therefore protect the natural places that were so precious to him. Of course, his first choice was to do so in person. However, he was well-aware of the power of writings and drawings to inspire awe, and through awe, action. The Sierra Club continues that tradition at the [Colby Library](#) in our Oakland headquarters (our two librarians are here today!) and at the [Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center](#) in Yosemite National Park and, increasingly online. However, the greatest collection of Muir documents can be found right here and online thanks to Pacific University. Thank you for stewarding these important documents and maximizing their power to inspire and motivate new generations. Students around the world today are showing us what they can do with a bit of inspiration!

I am sorry [Congressman McNeerney](#) was not able to join us today, but I would still like to thank him. In the spring of 2006, Sierra Club Deputy Executive Director [Bruce Hamilton spoke here at the University of the Pacific](#) and, in his remarks, noted the importance of defeating Congressman Pombo, who he described as the antithesis of John Muir. That year, a wind consultant and political newcomer, Jerry McNeerney, had the audacity to challenge seven-term incumbent Pombo ... and won an upset victory!

John Muir understood the importance of working with politicians, as most famously exemplified by his camping trip with President Roosevelt, which resulted in crucial support for protecting Yosemite and creating national parks. To this day, a core component of the Sierra Club's work is helping elect politicians that will be leaders in protecting nature, our planet and our communities—and then inspiring those political leaders to do even more.

When Muir decided to start the Sierra Club he told his friend, "Let us do something to make the mountains glad." And indeed we have. Not only did we work together to protect Yosemite and

create the National Park system ... but also to protect natural places, large and small, across the country.

After Yosemite, Muir's favorite place may have been Alaska, where he [explored glaciers with his friend's dog, Stickeen](#).

Today the Sierra Club is working with the Gwich'in people of Alaska and, you may be surprised to hear, big investors and financial institutions, to [protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from drilling](#). This is the largest remaining pristine wilderness area in the US, provides crucial denning habitat for polar bears and breeding ground for caribou whose numbers are so great, they make up the largest mammal migration in the world ... for now. After decades of struggle by environmentalists and local peoples to protect this world treasure, it is in imminent danger of being opened for drilling. Please go online to see how you can help. We hosted a webinar on this yesterday, which I encourage you to watch.

Muir's greatest idea however, was not just protecting Yosemite or Alaska or even creating the national park system, but rather the radical concept that EVERYONE should have access to the awe inspiring power of nature.

Today, the Sierra Club takes over a quarter million people a year out to Explore, Enjoy and Protect nature. Some go to Yosemite or the Arctic Refuge, but many go on short trips to a natural place near them. We place a special emphasis on taking kids, who might not otherwise have access to nature, as well as veterans who can benefit from the healing power of nature. (We have been working with Dr. Dacher Keltner, a neuroscientist at the [Greater Good Science Center at Cal Berkeley](#), to document this healing power).

Despite his tremendous vision, Muir did not fully anticipate the situation we find ourselves in today. In [Steep Trails](#) he wrote: "Fortunately, Nature has a few big places beyond man's power to spoil -- the ocean, the two icy ends of the globe, and the Grand Canyon."

Today, we see massive ice loss at both icy ends of the globe, the rapid retreat of Muir's beloved glaciers, the oceans being filled with plastics and threatened by acidification from climate change, and the Grand Canyon at risk from drought, dams, and coal pollution.

Sadly, California has very direct experience with the devastating consequences of climate catastrophe, with fires that have claimed so many lives and burned so many acres of land, and led to the bankruptcy of PG&E's the first, but certainly not the last, major climate caused bankruptcy.

It won't be easy, but we do have the solutions to climate change at hand. Not only are clean energy sources safer and healthier for our planet and communities, they also provide more jobs and are increasingly cheaper than fossil fuels. People across the country are recognizing this. Hundreds of cities and several states, including California, have committed to transitioning to 100% renewable energy. Businesses, schools and others are doing the same. The Sierra Club's [Ready for 100 campaign](#) promotes this work.

In conclusion, I hope you will take a look at John Muir's inspiring papers and then [join the Sierra Club's 3.5 million members and supporters in Exploring, Enjoying and Protecting the planet](#). Join us in the woods, in the streets, in City Hall, the State Capitol and the halls of Congress and together we will continue John Muir's remarkable legacy!