



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

1906-04-16

Letter from William E. Colby to John Muir, 1906 Apr 16.

William E. Colby

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"To explore, enjoy, and render accessible the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast; to publish authentic information concerning them; to enlist the support and co-operation of the people and the Government in preserving the forests and other natural features of the Sierra Nevada Mountains."



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San Francisco, April 16, 1906.

Mr. John Muir,

Adamana, Ariz.

My dear Mr. Muir:

Knowing your great interest in the Bill providing for the acceptance of the Reclusion of Yosemite Valley now before Congress, I am writing you the exact status of that bill in the hope that you may be able to aid us to remedy the serious situation which has arisen.

The Bill, in the form of a joint resolution, was introduced by Senator Perkins in the Senate and by Congressman Gillett in the House. The people of Fresno and Southern California secured the adoption of an amendment to the bill eliminating a narrow strip from the Southwestern boundary of the Park in order to permit closer access to a railroad from this direction so that the people of that section might reach the Park as readily as by the railroad now being constructed up the Merced Canyon.

The Secretary of the Interior approved of the amendment and, since the area eliminated is of little importance to the Park and will make the Park accessible to a greater number of people without interfering in any way with its scenic features, there would seem to be no objectionable feature in this amendment.

However, the Bill is now held up in the Senate by Senator Kittredge of South Dakota who refuses to allow it to be reported out of the Senate Committee on the ground that the amendment is objectionable. I have information from very reliable authority to the effect that Senator Kittredge is very friendly to the Merced Canyon Railroad, and his objection is due solely to the fact that the amendment would place the Fresno railroad on an equal footing with the Merced railroad. If he refuses to report the bill, it will probably be killed unless his objections can be overcome.

The Bill is also held up in the House by Speaker Cannon who objects to the acceptance of the Yosemite Valley by the Federal Government on the ground that increased appropriations for roads and trails will result. It is in line with his general policy of economy. I think, however, that his objection might be more easily overcome than Senator Kittredge's, if it were carefully explained to him that the State of California is granting the Valley without asking for any compensation, and that the few

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thousand dollars required annually for its care will largely be met by rental of privileges (hotel, etc.) within the Valley itself.

I am informed that if Cannon will consider the Bill, that it can be passed in the House, and then the House bill might be substituted for the Senate Bill, and Kittredge's opposition overcome.

It would be a great pity to see all our good work come to naught, especially after we have labored so hard to carry the bill through our State legislature. I very much fear that if the bill does not pass this session of Congress, the next State legislature will repeal the act of recession, and undo the entire matter, and destroy, for many years, at least, the possibility of bringing the whole Park under one jurisdiction.

Very truly yours,

I have sent you copies of the above letter thinking that if you sent them on to Mr. Harriman & the President that they might take the matter up. They have so many things on their mind that they cannot follow every detail of every bill & I thought that this would enable them to grasp the situation at once and take appropriate steps to overcome the difficulties. It is too bad that R. U. Johnson is in Italy, for he could help us without doubt. With best wishes

Sincerely yours

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