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Letter from C. H. Sholes to James R. Garfield, 1907 Sep 16.

C. H. Sholes

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Portland, Oregon, Sept. 16, 1907.

Honorable James R. Garfield,

Secretary of the Interior, Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:--

I am informed that a private corporation is seeking permission from the Government to appropriate and divert the flow of certain streams in Yosemite National Park, in California, together with appropriation of a large tract of land (specifically, the Hetch Hetchy Valley, a part of said National Park), for use as a storage reservoir; ostensibly for the purpose of furnishing water to San Francisco and adjacent cities.

Since my interest in this proposition, as a resident of Oregon, may be deemed somewhat remote, I beg to set forth briefly my reasons for protesting against the granting of the privilege asked for, until after the most careful scrutiny and intelligent examination of all interests which would be affected thereby.

If a precedent shall be established, permitting encroachment upon our National Parks, whether for reasons of alleged public welfare, or at the solicitation of a small contiguous community, I venture the opinion that it will not be long until covetous eyes will be cast upon the water power of every National Park in the country; especially such prolific sources of supply as Crater Lake and Rainier National

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Parks in Oregon and Washington respectively, wherein exists the most splendid lakes, streams, cascades and falls anywhere to be found in mountain regions. If these districts were the only ones that contained necessary water supply for the use of cities and towns in neighboring valleys, the situation would be momentarily different; in that event they would probably have been harnessed to the utilitarian needs of humanity long before they were petitioned by those same communities to be irrevocably set aside for park purposes---not as local parks of a limited population which might change its mind in a few years, but as great national pleasure-grounds for the perpetual use and enjoyment of all the pleasure-loving people of the United States, and tourists of other lands. In the particular instance under consideration, I believe it to be the undisputed fact---based upon the most intimate acquaintance for nearly twenty years with the mountain region of the Pacific Coast from Mount Shasta in northern California to Mount Baker near the north line of Washington---that inexhaustible sources of pure water may be obtained for the purpose for which these Yosemite streams are sought to be appropriated, from other mountain supplies (though perhaps not so easily and inexpensively) outside the park, from a territory not well adapted to park purposes. I am advised by persons whom I know to be competent and trustworthy observers who have been over that

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particular territory year after year, that such outside supply does exist. That being so, there seems to be no reason why this application should not be denied.

You, Mr. Secretary, have lately viewed with your own eyes some portions of our forest domain, including Crater Lake National Park---a preserve which was only secured to come under the guardianship of the Government after years of effort, but the wisdom of which is now widely accepted. And I beg you will not forget that all of these National Parks are but pencil points, as it were, in this magnificent alpine domain of California, Oregon and Washington; and yet, insignificant as they are in comparison with what remains, the process of spoliation seems to have begun, and if not checked in the outset by the highest authority in the Government, the day of their ultimate destruction is at hand.

Trusting that you will give this subject your most careful and earnest consideration,

I am, Sir,

Very respectfully yours,

C. H. Sholes,

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