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Letter from John Muir et al. to William Kent, 1913 Jun 27.

John Muir

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PURPOSES: To preserve from destructive invasion our National Parks—Nature's Wonderlands. To enlist the support and co-operation of all organizations and individuals interested in such preservation and to publish and circulate information to accomplish these objects.

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San Francisco, June 27, 1913.

Hon. William Kent,
House of Representatives,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

The Yosemite National Park is not only the greatest and most wonderful national playground in California, but in many of its features it is without a rival in the whole world. It belongs to the American people and in world wide interest ranks with the Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. It embraces the head waters of two rivers—the Merced and the Tuolumne. The Yosemite Valley is in the Merced basin; the Hetch Hetchy Valley, the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne, and the Tuolumne Meadows are in the Tuolumne Basin. Excepting only the Yosemite Valley, the Tuolumne basin in its general features is the more wonderful and larger half of the Park.

The Hetch Hetchy Valley is a wonderfully exact counterpart of the great Yosemite, not only in its cliffs and waterfalls and peaceful river, but in the gardens, groves, meadows and camp grounds of its flowery park-like floor.

At a recent session of Congress a most determined attack was made by the City of San Francisco to get the right to use the Hetch Hetchy Valley as a reservoir site, thus depriving ninety millions of people of one of their most priceless possessions for the sake of saving San Francisco dollars.

As soon as this scheme became manifest, public-spirited citizens all over the country entered their protests, and before the session was over, the Park invaders saw that they were defeated, and permitted the bill to die without bringing it to a vote, so as to be able to try again.

Ever ready to take advantage of every political change, a bill having the same destructive purpose has been re-introduced at this session of Congress and is now pending before the Public Lands Committee, and its supporters are speciously urging that it should be rushed through at this special session as an emergency measure when in reality nothing like an emergency exists.

San Francisco may be in immediate need of an increased supply of water but her own engineers admit that the present supply can be more than doubled by adding to present nearby sources and that is the first and most economic plan of development before the city eventually goes to the Sierra for additional water.

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The advisory Board of Army Engineers "is of the opinion that there are several sources of water supply that could be obtained and used by the city of San Francisco and adjacent communities to supplement the nearby supplies as the necessity develops. From any one of these sources the water is sufficient in quantity and is, or can be made, suitable in quality."

We are preparing data based on the reports of the Army Engineers which will demonstrate that San Francisco can obtain abundance of pure water from other sources than the Tuolumne Hetch Hetchy.

So important a bill should not be rushed through Congress without mature consideration and time allowed for its opponents to be heard. Anything less would be unjust to the American people, therefore in behalf of all who appreciate our mountain parks and believe that they should be preserved, we call on you to aid us in postponing consideration of this destructive bill until the regular session of Congress, for we have not even seen a copy of the bill now being considered. Ever since the establishment of the Yosemite National Park by Act of Congress, October 8th, 1890, constant strife has been going on around its boundaries and is likely to go on as part of the universal battle between good and evil however much its boundaries may be broken or wild beauty destroyed.

When this application was first made over ten years ago the Secretary of the Interior then holding office emphatically denied the right saying in part:

"Presumably the Yosemite National Park was created such by law because of the natural objects, of varying degrees of scenic importance, located within its boundaries, inclusive alike of its beautiful small lakes, like Eleanor, and its majestic wonders, like Hetch Hetchy and Yosemite Valley. It is the aggregation of such natural scenic features that makes the Yosemite Park a wonderland which the Congress of the United States sought by law to preserve for all coming time as nearly as practicable in the condition fashioned by the hand of the Creator - a worthy object of national pride and a source of healthful pleasure and rest for the thousands of people who may annually sojourn there during the heated months."

In behalf of all of the people of the nation we ask your aid in putting an end to these assaults on our great national parks and to prevent this measure from being rushed through before it can be brought to the attention of the ninety millions of people who own this park.

Faithfully yours,

John Muir
E. T. Parsons
Wm. F. Bode
R. V. Cooley