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1913-07-15

Letter from John Muir to R[obert] U[nderwood] Johnson, 1913 Jul  
15.

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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RE HETCH HETCHY.

San Francisco, July 15, 1913.

Mr. Robert Underwood Johnson,  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Sir:

The Yosemite National Park is not only the greatest and most wonderful national playground in California, but in some of its features it is without a rival in the whole world - its Silver Fir and Sequoia forests - its twin songful rivers and its twin Yosemite. It belongs to the American people and in universal interest ranks with the Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. The head waters of the two rivers embraced within its boundaries are 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 sublime cliffs and waterfalls and its peaceful river, but in the gardens, groves, meadows and camp grounds on 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 beclouding political changes, a bill having the same destructive purpose has been introduced at this session of Congress, and its supporters are speciously urging that it should be rushed through 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 nearby sources and this plan in any case will have to be followed, for years will be required to bring water to the city from any of the Sierra sources.



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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 next regular session of Congress.

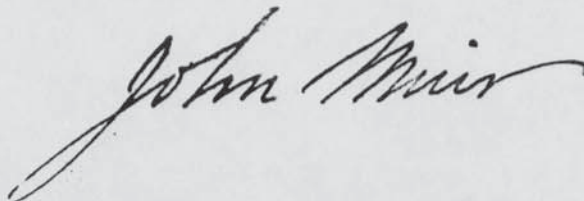
Ever since the establishment of the Yosemite National Park by Act of Congress, October 8th, 1890, constant strife has been going on around its boundaries and is likely to go on as part of the universal battle between good and evil however much its boundaries may be broken or its wild beauty destroyed.

Over ten years ago when the first application was made for the use of Hetch Hetchy as a San Francisco reservoir 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 NATIONAL PARKS and to prevent this measure from being rushed through before it can be brought to the attention of all the millions of people who own this park.

Faithfully yours,



P. S. EDITORS are respectfully requested to write brief editorials and news items informing the Public and calling on them to write to their Congressmen and Senators and protest; and are welcome to publish the foregoing letter in whole or in part.

*Sent to 1418 Daily & Weekly Papers J. M. E.T.P.*