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# Letter from [John Muir] to [James R. Garfield], [ca. 1908 Jan].

John Muir

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Crocker's Station
Sequoia, Tuolumne Co., California
23 Miles from Yo Semite Valley
Big Oak Flat Route

Mrs. H. R. Crocker, Proprietress

[ca. Jan. 1908]
[ca. ~~Dec~~ 1906?]

Sequoia, Cal., ____ 190

The Honorable Secretary of the Interior

Sir:

The Sierra Club begs to submit the following suggestions as to road building & other needed improvements in Yosemite National Park.

1. That a general plan for the treatment of the Yosemite Valley be made by a competent landscape artist & carried out under his supervision at a cost of about one hundred & fifty thousand dollars. This would include the trimming & clearing of undergrowth jungles; the building of a permanent system of roads located with reference to scenery aesthetic effects etc, instead of the present hap hazard dust & mud ridden called roads; & the restoration of the downtrodden herbaceous vegetation to something like the beauty of wildness, etc

~~1.~~ The roads on the floor of the Valley are in very poor condition. They are composed of granite sand and they must be provided with a suitable foundation, and properly macadamized. The cost of thoroughly reconstructing these roads and placing them in first class condition is estimated to be in the neighborhood of One Hundred and Fifty Thousand ($150,000) Dollars. We strongly urge that the most competent landscape artist available, be secured to provide a general plan of improvement for the floor of the Valley and lay out the roads with due regard for the convenience of the traveling public and also keeping in mind aesthetic considerations as well. Undergrowth should be cleared away in places and vistas opened for viewing the unparalleled scenery, but this should be done only under direction of a most competent authority.

2. That a road be built into Hetch Hetchy Valley connecting with the present wagon road which now terminates at a distance of about nine miles from the lower end of the Valley. Government engineers have estimated that the cost of such a road would be about Fifteen Thousand ($15,000) Dollars. Next to Yosemite itself, Hetch Hetchy is the greatest attraction in the Park, It will be visited by countless thousands when once made easily accesible.

3. That all private holdings within the Park be extinguished by purchase or condemnation. Perhaps the most important of these is the old Tioga Road which follows up the main dividing ridge between the Tuolumne & Merced rivers into the Tuolumne Meadows, thus

repair. It follows up the main dividing ridge between the Tuolumne and Merced Rivers, into the Tuolumne Meadows and is about sixty miles in length. It opens the heart of the Park and is the strategic highway essential for tourist travel and patrolling as well. This road was formerly built by a mining company at great expense and is claimed by its successors in interest. There is some question as to whether the franchise to this road has lapsed or not. If it can be purchased for a nominal sum we would recommend its purchase in view of the great expense of its construction and the equities of the case. Otherwise, we would recommend that you refer the matter of title to the Department of Justice for an opinion and that steps be taken to condemn the road if the title be found still existing or that possession be taken and the road repaired if the title be found to have lapsed.

opening the central part of the Park to tourist travel. It was built by a mining company but has long been out of repair. It could probably be purchased & put in good condition for much less than the original cost.

4. We most earnestly recommend the construction of a trail from Yosemite Valley leading directly up the wonderful scenic canyon of the Merced River to its headwaters, thence into the Tuolumne Meadows and down the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne to the Hetch Hetchy Valley. Portions of trails now exist in the Merced Canyon which are along the main route proposed and the intervening links can be constructed at comparatively small expense. Probably a few hundred dollars would make the trail passable as far as the Tuolumne Meadows but it will require several thousand to build a trail down the Tuolumne Canyon. This expenditure is amply justified for there will be no grander scenic route in the whole world than will be opened up by

That be built

The cost would be considerable but it would be justified over & over again by bringing to view the most sublime & beautiful canyon scenery of the Sierra or the world.

will [illegible]

~~the construction of such a trail.~~

5. A trail built directly up the Tenaya Canyon from Yosemite Valley to Lake Tenaya ~~will~~ would enable travellers to reach the Eastern portion of the Park much more directly and earlier in the year. While a great deal of blasting will be required, this trail could probably be built for fifteen thousand ($15,000) Dollars.

It will require an appropriation of at least two hundred and fifty thousand ($250,000) Dollars to effect ~~all of~~ the improvements suggested, ~~with the possible exception of the purchase of all the private holdings~~ and we respectfully urge that such an appropriation be made ~~for this purpose.~~

When once constructed and placed in good condition the roads and trails of the Yosemite National Park can be kept in repair at a comparatively slight expense, but it is very important that this great world wonderland should be improved now.

Respectfully submitted,

_____ President

Wm. Colby Secretary

Joseph N. LeConte Treasurer

Wm. F. Badé

E. T. Parsons.

Committee of Board of Directors of the Sierra Club on Welfare and Improvement of the Yosemite National Park.

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