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1899-04-28

Letter from W[illia]m G. Kerckhoff to W[illia]m H. Knight, 1899 Apr 28.

William G. Kerckhoff

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Board of Directors
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Forest and Water Association
Of Los Angeles County.

[Los Angeles Branch of the Forest and Water Society of Southern California.]

WM. G. KERCKHOFF, President,
254 S. Los Angeles St.,
T. P. LUKENS, Vice-Pres.,
Pasadena.
WM. H. KNIGHT, Secretary,
27 Bryson Block.

Los Angeles, Cal. April 28, 1899.

To the Honorable
SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

The Forest and Water Association of Los Angeles County desires most respectfully to call your attention to the following facts:

The conservation of our mountain forests is a work of the most vital importance to the people of Southern California. In no other locality of the United States is the welfare of its people so dependent on the protection of its forests, and the preservation of its water sheds.

During the past three years a very large proportion of our forest reservations has been devastated and denuded by forest fires and the herding of sheep and other stock upon them, and the damage and loss to Southern California from these causes has been incalculable.

We are now approaching the dry season of another year, in a succession of years with a very limited rainfall, and as yet with no steps taken, so far as we have learned, to provide a force of men at all adequate to properly care for these reservations during the coming dry season; and it is imperative that some suitable action be taken at once in the line of caring for these reservations in a manner commensurate with the great importance of the work.

We would, most respectfully yet most urgently, request that you grant us, at the earliest possible time, adequate aid for properly caring for these reservations, and would suggest:

1. That the herding of sheep or other stock upon the reservations, or the passage of stock over them, (which is often used as a pretense in order to get an opportunity to use them for pasture) be absolutely prohibited.

2. Large portions of the Sierra Madre Range are very rugged and precipitous, being almost inaccessible except by the use of trails, the construction of which should be provided for so that fires may be readily combatted.

3. The forest reservations are largely used for the purpose of camping in the summer time, and many of the forest fires are attributable to the

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careless use of camp fires. We recommend a system of permits to be granted at the entrances to these reserves, under such regulations as will not make it a hardship upon the people desiring to camp, but which at the same time will keep out irresponsible parties and check the careless use of fire.

4. In addition to the force required in other forest reservations of Southern California, we estimate that the San Gabriel Reservation, which is mainly within this County, will require at least two companies of soldiers.

5. When civilians are selected for patrolmen, we suggest that they be taken from the mountaineers who are familiar with these localities.

6. We also urge the importance of replanting the denuded portions of our mountains as rapidly as possible to such varieties of trees as are known to be best adapted to the conditions and requirements. If permitted to remain bare for any length of time, the rain will gully the steep slopes and wash away the little remaining soil, carrying debris to cover the rich valley lands, and there will be no water for irrigation.

A Forestry School has been organized under the auspices of the University of Southern California for the purpose of furnishing educated foresters to the Government. Associations, general and local, for the protection of our forest reservations, are being organized all over Southern California. These embrace our most prominent citizens who are giving it much careful thought and attention, and who are desirous of aiding and upholding the Government in every way possible. We believe that these organizations, if permitted, could furnish the Department with many valuable suggestions. In this connection we tender to the Government the aid and assistance of our Association.

Very respectfully,

WM. G. KERCKHOFF,

President.

WM. H. KNIGHT,

Secretary.