



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

1905-01-07

Letter from W[illia]m E. Colby to John Muir, 1905 Jan 7.

William E. Colby

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"To explore, enjoy, and render accessible the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast; to publish authentic information concerning them; to enlist the support and co-operation of the people and the Government in preserving the forests and other natural features of the Sierra Nevada Mountains."



SIERRA CLUB
316 MILLS BUILDING
SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.

*File in book
Kindly return
this letter to
Mr. Muir*

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San Francisco, Cal., Jan. 7, 1905.

John Muir, Esq.,
President Sierra Club,
Martinez, Cal.

My Dear Mr. Muir:

I enclose you a letter which I have just written to Senator Perkins which will explain to you the situation in Sacramento. I have just spent a day and a night there working on this Recession matter in company with one or two other members of our committee. I did this in order to ascertain the exact sentiment of the Legislature as near as it could be determined in advance and also to do as much missionary work as possible and prepare the way for the introduction of the bill in both houses. I think we have a very clear idea as to the present situation.

The Assembly seems to ^{be} with us, but I am afraid from present indications that the majority of the Senate are opposed to the Recession for the reasons given in the letter to Senator Perkins. The influence of the Examiner does not seem to be as great as I had anticipated, though it undoubtedly has aided Senator Curtin in his influence in the Senate. If you can by any possibility get any expression of opinion from any of the high officials in Washington as to what the U.S. Government would do for Yosemite Valley if it

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were receded, it will aid us in overcoming this sentiment. Most of the Senators I talked with said that if we could give them some positive assurance on this point, they would favor the Recession instead of opposing it. I had thought that perhaps a letter from you direct to the President asking for an expression of opinion from him would do a world of good and might turn the balance so that the measure would carry. Of course such an expression ought to be obtained as soon as possible. I think the President would undoubtedly do this for you, especially in view of the independent attitude he is assuming upon all matters. I think that your letter to Harriman will also result in great good, from what I can understand.

In your last letter you wrote me that you wished us to get some of the newspapers to work on the other side of the proposition. Mr. Warren Gregory, who is a great friend of Mr. De Young's, promised me that he would see Mr. De Young at his earliest opportunity and try and arrange to have the Chronicle come out strongly in favor of the Recession at the critical moment, that is, immediately before the bill comes up for discussion in the Legislature. Mr. Gregory agrees with me that the strongest thing we could do would be to have a letter from you. This could be published together with expressions of opinion from President Jordan, President Wheeler, Chief Justice Beatty, and many other influential men who are on our side. If you would consent to write such a letter I would be glad to outline certain facts and arguments which I think it would be well for you to include in your statement to counteract some of the influences which have been working the other way.

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I have been working hard on this question because, once taken up I am very anxious to see it go through, but almost all the work has fallen on me and I have been sadly neglecting my business for the past few days. The difficulty is that men like the Senator referred to and the Examiner reporters have nothing else to do but to devote their entire time to fighting this proposed Recession. Those who favor the Recession have not the same personal animus nor the time to devote to the proposition and hence it is in serious jeopardy. I have done and will continue to do all that I possibly can to aid in this matter but I need some strong assistance.

There will be a Directors' meeting a week from today and I trust that you can be down on that date and we can further talk over this important matter.

Very truly yours,

John C. Colby.

If you can get the President to state what he proposes doing for Yosemite - in case it is turned back to the Federal government it would do worlds of good. If you can explain to him the present situation - to wit: - that the people the newspapers (excepting the Examiner) are with us & the only opposition is a personal one in the State Senate - & that that can be overcome by a positive statement from him as to what he would propose doing for Yosemite in case it is receded, I think he would gladly help.
J.C.C.

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Will Mr
Loeb kindly
return this letter
to Mr. Minis
Martinez, California.

Copy

San Francisco, Cal., Jan. 7, 1905.

Honorable George C. Perkins,
Senate Chamber,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

I regret extremely to trouble you again in the matter of the
Recession of the Yosemite Valley, particularly in view of what you
have already written me on the subject, but the matter is of such
extreme importance to the movement and of such vital interest to
our Club that I trust you will pardon me for writing this commu-
nication.

I have just returned from Sacramento where I spent a day in
interviewing the State Legislators on this proposition. I find
that the feeling among those who understand the situation is very
strongly in favor of Recession and I think that we will have no
difficulty in the Assembly. In the Senate, however, I find that
we are meeting with serious oppositin from one or two gentlemen
who have personal grievances against the U. S. Government in their
management of the Yosemite National Park. Senator Curtin of
Sonora, a Democrat, who owns a cattle ranch near the Yosemite
National Park, has had personal conflicts with the authorities of the
National Park and so have many of his clients in the matter of

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driving cattle to and from their private holdings within the Park boundaries, and he is very bitterly opposed to any recession of the Yosemite Valley to the Federal Government by reason of these facts. He is spending his entire time combating this measure and in stirring up sentiment against it. He is a strong fighter and I ascertained that he had influenced a great many senators against the proposition. You can readily see that we who favor the movement and have no personal animosities to influence our action have difficulty in counteracting this sentiment that is being created. Senator Curtin's main argument is that we have no assurance that the National Government will do any more for the Yosemite Valley than it has done for the Yosemite National Park which he claims is a very insignificant amount. He has influenced so many Senators that it has resolved itself into this proposition: All these Senators have stated to me that if we can give them any positive assurance that the Federal Government will do more for Yosemite Valley than the State has done for it, they will favor the Recession, but in the absence of such proof they are going to oppose it.

I have written to you because I think that you can aid us in this situation and request that you will take this matter up for us and write us as strong a letter as you feel justified in doing, stating what in your opinion the National Government would do for Yosemite Valley if it were receded, and if possible, if you could secure for us some similar expression of opinion from other high officials qualified to make a statement in such a matter, for example, the Secretary of the Interior, it would unquestionably be

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of the greatest assistance to us and would undoubtedly remove the main objection which has been raised in the manner I have indicated herein before.

The Sierra Club receives clippings from newspapers throughout the State and every newspaper with the exception of the San Francisco Examiner and one or two country papers that the Examiner controls, has unqualifiedly in editorial comment and otherwise, expressed itself as being strongly in favor of Recession.

Trusting that you will see fit to render us this assistance at this critical time, I remain

Very sincerely yours,

William E Colby
Sec. Sierra Club
Room 16, 3^d Floor
Mills Building
San Francisco

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