

1039 Chestnut Street
Paso Robles, Calif.
March 28, 1965

Mr. Hugo Fisher, Administrator
The Resources Agency: State of California
Sacramento, California

Re: (THE) NIPOMO DUNES

Dear Mr. Fisher:

Day after tomorrow, March 31, you and Mr. Fred Jones are reported in our San Luis Obispo County newspapers to have an appointment with a delegation of citizens from the south part of San Luis Obispo County. Their purpose, as reported in the newspapers, is to present a case in favor of P.O. & H. power plants (and other industrial development) in an area long considered uniquely suitable for a state park; the sand dunes which are called variously: The Nipomo Dunes, The Oceano Dunes, The Santa Maria Dunes, The Oso Flaco Dunes.

This is a section of sand dune land approximately four miles north to south and two-and-a-half to three miles east to west, bounded by Black Lake on the north, Oso Flaco Lake on the south, the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks on the east and the Pacific Ocean on the west.

This limited area is the heartland of the sand dunes referred to in the Pacific Coast Recreation Area Survey of the National Park Service in 1959, and of the California Public Outdoor Recreation Plan of 1960, as the Santa Maria Dunes. Both documents indicate high scenic quality and extensive recreation potential in this and adjoining sand dune area. It is also part of the Plano to Point Sal State Park complex proposal.

For some years I understand college classes under qualified scientific supervision have used these dune lands as a special study area. Dr. J. R. Haller, Taxonomist, whose special fields are Plant Geography and Evolution, Department of Biological Sciences, University of California, Santa Barbara Campus, told me only yesterday afternoon:

"We are using the Nipomo Dunes as an introductory course in the entire California flora, because they carry such an unusually representative and extensive variety of California plants; and we are also regularly using the dunes for senior projects and advanced studies in evolution and hybridization."

The intensive recreation use of these dunes is evidenced by the statewide meets of sand dune vehicle clubs each year, which attract thousands of enthusiasts from several western states. Other recreation uses are hiking, nature study, fishing (both lake and ocean), bathing, tideline motoring, clam digging and amateur archaeology in the Indian kitchen middens. An estimated 150,000 persons were actually on the beach over the unusually low-tide weekend of mid-January this year.

The beauty of the dunes has not only been described by the National Park Service as scenically superior to any other dunes in California, but their beauty has been photographed by Edward Weston and Ansel Adams, by Philip Hyde and others.

Recreation and power plants are both water-oriented, and are increasingly in competition for sites. The pyramid is perplexing: more people,

more power, more recreation... It is the dilemma of people -- who need relief from the confusion of their own making -- and of industries which they demand to serve them on the high standard of living to which they have become accustomed. We hope to see this dilemma felicitously resolved in San Luis Obispo County. And I believe it can be.

In my opinion we can eat our cake and have it, too: science and recreation in the Dunes, and power plants and industry elsewhere. The ecologically rich areas of the Hipomo Dunes can be saved as a "reserve" for scientific research and at the same time be used as a land barbed natural vegetation. In my opinion there is room for undisturbed natural vegetation to continue to survive unimpaired; there is room for hikers, horseback riders, picnickers and campers; there is room for the beach buggies and sand jeeps, the fishermen; there are and rent-seaters, all in the Dunes areas. And there are other localities in San Luis Obispo County more appropriate for industrial development close to the ocean, but on land not so rich ecologically. Nor so uniquely attractive for varied recreation.

For your perusal I enclose a few pages from a manuscript I am preparing about the Hipomo Dunes at the suggestion of Senator Vernon L. Sturgeon. You do not need to return this.

The delegation which comes to call on you Wednesday is primarily men from south San Luis Obispo County. It may well be that they will present to you resolutions from over a hundred organizations. But the people represented by these resolutions are not qualified to judge the Hipomo Dunes for the highest and wisest land use.

And in my opinion most of the participants in this March 31 trek to Sacramento to talk to you are probably not motivated by a desire for the highest land use of the Hipomo Dunes area; and it is undoubtedly true that they are not technically qualified to judge.

(Red Rogoway, San Luis Obispo County Planning Director, is an exception to this statement; but he is under great pressure. I know Mr. Rogoway.)

The motives for this trek to Sacramento need scrutiny. From my view, it is motivated by ambitious economic effort toward dollars for south San Luis Obispo County businesses. This does not seem unworthy, but it is certainly a limited motive. The economic good of the whole of San Luis Obispo County would be a more laudable effort, as well as planning for a better spread of land use.

In conclusion, I boldly take the liberty of urging that you listen to the San Luis Obispo County delegation and hear them out, thank them for coming, but make no commitments at this time -- unless you feel it expedient to reiterate support of any stand The Resources Agency

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may already have taken in protection of the Dunes. And I beg your indulgence with my boldness in speaking thus.

An exhaustive feasibility study is needed. And such a feasibility study was so directed by the California State Senate's passage of Senator Vernon L. Sturgeon's Senate Resolution Number 33 on April 28, 1964. . . . a study to determine the feasibility of establishing a state park at the Santa Maria Dunes.

I am exceedingly pleased about the announced talk to be made by Mr. Robert Deering (Region 5, Planning and Development, Goleta office of State Department of Parks and Recreation) on March 31st before the Arroyo Grande Chamber of Commerce, on: "Economic Impact of State Parks on an Area; and Future Plans for Pismo Beach State Park, including a campaign to attract year-round visitors". . . . This is perfect timing!

One of the pleasures I had at the December meeting of the Sierra Club Board of Directors in San Francisco was meeting you and chatting; so I do not feel I am writing to a stranger, but to one whom I have met under friendly circumstances, and hope to encounter again.

Respectfully - and cordially,

Mrs. Duncan P. Jackson
Sierra Club Coordinator in San Luis
Obispo County for Preservation of
the Nipomo Dunes.

cc Dr. William E. Siri

copies also went to:

Lee Wilson

Rohlf

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Robt Deering & Milt Frinke

Doris Leonard & Geo. Collins