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1039 Chestnut St.  
Paso Robles, Calif.  
March 29, 1965

Mr. Fred L. Jones, Director  
Department of Parks and Recreation  
The Resources Agency of California  
Sacramento, California

Re: The NIPOMO DUNES

Dear Mr. Jones:

Since I had first heard the rumour of your probably appointment as Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation from my valued friend Dr. A. Starker Leopold, it was indeed a pleasure to learn of this confirmation - and to meet you on March 13th at the Sierra Club Board of Directors meeting in San Francisco.

Because you are a Sierra Club member and because you were a student of Dr. Leopold's, I feel ungaurded and able to write to you with great frankness - also with the comfortable knowledge that you are intimately familiar with Sierra Club attitudes toward scenic resources, toward the scientific asset in undisturbed natural areas and toward wholesome outdoor recreation. Too, I like the feeling that I don't have to explain the word 'ecology'.

Our county newspapers have announced that on Wednesday Mr. Fisher and you will receive 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. C. & E. 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 Oceanso Dunes, the Santa Maria Dunes, the Oso Flaco Dunes.

I am sure you have a wealth of data describing the location and character of the Nipomo Dunes. So I will not go into this as I did to some extent in my letter today addressed to Mr. Fisher - as I was not sure how familiar he is with authoritative comment on the Dunes area.

My thought in writing to you was originally to give you thumbnail sketches of each of the leaders of this Wednesday delegation and indicate their probable motives as participants in this trek to Sacramento. Then I reflected on the hazards of getting into personalities; so I wish merely to suggest that the motives of this business group in making this trek to talk to Mr. Fisher and to you, do indeed bear scrutiny. I wrote this to Mr. Fisher and to it is either a matter of dollars for south county businesses, or it is protection of a job. I would be glad to elaborate on this at any time should we be talking together.

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Mr. Ned Rogoway, the San Luis Obispo County Planning Director, I am very, very sorry to see acquiescing to participation in this trip to Sacramento. I have always felt he has the background, ideals and ideas to make a good county planning director. He has been wonderfully helpful and encouraging to the Sierra Club group in San Luis Obispo County in our early efforts to "save" land - particularly in our work on the many thousands of acres of Bureau of Land Management lands still in this county. He and I have had many long talks on land and planning. He has helped me and has "educated" me in many ways. But during the past year he has come under extreme pressure from some county groups. I have not sat down and talked with him for about six months. Not deliberately...but there has developed a drift...

The extreme pressure of the businessmen in south San Luis Obispo County to reach for economic security stems from the fact that a large section of that part of the county is the county's blighted area. It has a few hundreds of acres of very fertile bottomland, but thousands of acres of land that is not very fertile, has only spotty water, has many hundreds of acres of old eucalyptus groves of little use, and has attracted a shiftless squatter population, who live in cheap and dilapidated housing - many in shabby trailers with outdoor privy sanitation. The bulk of our county welfare money has to be spent in the south county.

Although there certainly are people of education in the south county, and of fineness, there is, however, a current of frontier spirit. A certain ruthless element seems to dominate the chambers of commerce down in that end of the county, and some of the spokesmen certainly are individuals of very limited education and standards; some school board problems down there reveal a complete lack of sensitivity.

Local merchants, either unqualified or unwilling to recognize the highest use of such unique land as the Nipomo Dunes, should not be the ones to make the final decision on land which has significant value to the people of the State and of the Nation.

As I wrote to Mr. Fisher, 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 (Nipomo) Dunes.



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When I come to the Wilderness Conference I will bring some of my material on the Nipomo Dunes, just in case you are there and might wish to discuss the matter.

I worked very closely with Kenneth J. Diercks, Executive Representative of P. G. & E. for two years (January '63-January '65) on this Nipomo Dunes matter. However, the conflict began to come to more of a head -- and Will Siri appointed me as the Sierra Club Coordinator in San Luis Obispo County for Preservation of the Nipomo Dunes, so Ken Diercks and I dropped our close cooperative relationship, although we are certainly still good friends. Any cooperation between P. G. & E. and the Sierra Club I now leave to communication on the national level.

However, were it necessary, I would take a firm, embattled stand for protection of the Dunes. I say this to indicate to you how strongly I feel about the value of the asset in the Dunes. Were it necessary, I would not hesitate to engage in another Bodega Head conflict on the Dunes if the Sierra Club so indicated.

However, in as far as you expediently can, I hope soon to learn how much of the coast is encompassed in the thinking of your Department of Parks and Recreation -- here in the Dunes, I mean. There is, of course, strength in working together on an agreed line.

For your perusal (and no need to return) I enclose an excerpt from a manuscript I have in preparation on the Nipomo Dunes, at the suggestion of Senator Vernon L. Sturgeon. I sent this same excerpt to Mr. Fisher. I would like to lend you or discuss with you sometime some of the factual material I have in this manuscript having to do with the recreation potential in the Dunes area. There are, for instance, possibilities for a most unusual fresh water complex there, embracing marsh wildlife habitat, fishing, and all forms of non-mechanized boating, and also facilities for nature study.

I would like to tell you of my plans to try to get some people to write special papers on natural science in the Dunes; for instance, Dr. Roast of Cal Poly is especially interested in rodents -- and the Dunes even have an endemic kangaroo rat, the Morroensis. And so forth and so on. . .

I hope that with the delegation from south San Luis Obispo County you can quietly but firmly hold the line.

Cordially,

Mrs. Duncan P. Jackson  
Sierra Club Coordinator  
Nipomo Dunes Preservation

cc Dr. William E. Siri  
Enc MS

Not sent to Lee Wilson