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July 2024

1950 Memorandum & Newspaper Clipping Refuting Claim that Proposed Dam Would Damage Fossils

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Recommended Citation

Nusbaum, Jesse L., "1950 Memorandum & Newspaper Clipping Refuting Claim that Proposed Dam Would Damage Fossils" (2024). *Dinosaur National Monument*. 11.
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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Region Three
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Dinosaur
March 13, 1950

Memorandum

To: The Director
From: Archeologist Nusbaum
Subject: Statement of Director Untermann, Utah Field House of Natural History, Vernal, Utah, reference the absence of Dinosaur remains in area to be inundated by construction of Echo Park Dam.

The attached clipping from the Denver Post of March 12, 1950 indicates complications arising from the fact that present, vastly enlarged Dinosaur National Monument perpetuated the name of the original nuclear dinosaur quarry site reservation.

I discussed the results of my conference with Director Untermann in my memorandum for you, dated February 2, advising of the offer of Carnegie Museum to return duplicate and surplus dinosaur fossils to the Field House, and of the current progress of the fund raising campaign at Vernal.

On that visit, I also talked with Mrs. Untermann, a graduate student of the University of California with an M.A. in zoology, if memory serves, who was employed on fossil and other research work at Dinosaur National Monument that summer, probably as a Temporary Ranger. Director Untermann I believe had also served in like capacity for two previous summers. I also met and talked with his aged father, who worked on the original quarry excavations under Earl Douglass of Carnegie Museum. Being an artist, he painted many restorations of the varied dinosaurs in natural habitat, and subsequently, made the paintings thereof that are exhibited at the monument museum.

Purpose of this memorandum is to provide more background on the relationship of the elder Mr. Untermann, and Director and Mrs. Untermann with Dinosaur National Monument, prior to, and subsequent to, its establishment and enlargement.

(SIGNED)

Jesse L. Nusbaum
Archeologist

Copy to: Regional Director, Region Two
✓ Regional Director, Region Three

JLN:jo

*Re 3-13-50
Dinosaur*

McColm

Patraw

3-13

The Denver Post
March 12, 1950

SA THE DENVER POST; Sunday, March 12, 1950

Dam Held No Danger To Dinosaur Fossils

Denver Post Special.

VERNAL, Utah, March 11.—An expert claims that construction of the proposed Echo Park dam inside Dinosaur National Monument—at the confluence of the Green and Yampa rivers—would not damage any scientific or fossil values.

He is G. E. Untermann, director of the Utah Field House of Natural History, located here.

The dam site must be approved by Interior Secretary Chapman before congressional approval of the dam can be sought, according to

former Vernal Mayor B. H. Stringham, chairman of the Colorado river development committee of twenty-one counties.

BUILD IN COLORADO.

The dam, which would be built in the northwestern corner of Colorado, would be the key structure of the long range central Utah project contemplated for the distant future as well as of the more immediate Colorado river storage plan.

"Mrs. Untermann and I are the geologists who have mapped the 318 square miles of the Dinosaur National Monument," Untermann said. "The dam itself will be constructed in the Uintah quartzite of proterozoic age, a formation in which there is no fossil life whatever and which preceded the Morrison dinosaur beds by 850 million years."

EXCEPTION NOTED.

"All other formations inundated by the storage water are also many millions of years older than the dinosaur beds. There is just one exception to this and that is the Browns park formation of pliocene age. But it does not carry dinosaurs either. What few mammal fossils this formation has produced were recovered from high areas many miles from the river," he said.

"The only fossil material which could possibly be affected by the filled reservoir are a few limestones carrying fossil seashells. However, these same formations are well represented in other parts of the monument which are in no way related to the dam or reservoir sites."

The proposed dam would back water up the Green river and Yampa canyons to a depth of 500 feet, creating a 100-mile long lake rivaling Lake Meade.

Power from the dam would be used to develop the central Utah project, an ambitious plan under which water from the Green river would be diverted to the Uintah region, and water from the Uintah area taken by highline canals to the west slope of the Wasatch range in the Salt Lake-Provo area.

Natt N. Dodge
Region Three Office