January 1, 1959

Hon. Wallace F. Bennett:
United States Senate
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator Bennett:

This letter is in response to yours of December 30, 1958 wherein you requested the advice and recommendations of the Upper Colorado River Commission concerning the desirability and wisdom of introducing a Bill during the 86th Congress to authorize the Echo Park Dam in connection with the Colorado River Storage Project.

Due to the Holiday Season and because our Commission recently held a Special Meeting it is not expedient to convene the Commission in the immediate future.

I have conferred with each of our Commissioners representing Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming and the United States and have discussed the question of legislation being introduced in the Congress at this time to authorize the construction of the Echo Park Dam. Our five Commissioners are unanimous in the opinion that the introduction of legislation to authorize the Echo Park Storage Unit would be unwise, could not conceivably produce beneficial results, and might, on the other hand, do considerable damage to the rate of progress of the resources development of the four Upper Division States of the Colorado River. Although many of us would like to have an acceleration in this rate, especially in certain areas, I am sure that we all concede that under existing economic and world conditions progress has been almost phenomenal since Public Law 485 became a reality on April 11, 1956.

Bi-Partisan, cooperative, united efforts of our 4-State delegations in Congress, our Governors, Commissioners and many others have produced these sweet fruits of success.

Late in 1955 and early in 1956 while the Colorado River Storage Project legislation (H. R. 3383, Aspinall) was still pending before the House of Representatives, proponents of the Bill, including the Congressional delegations of our four Upper Division States, reached an agreement with the wildlife, nature, and conservation organizations, that had been bitter and effective opponents of the proposed Colorado River Storage Project, to the effect that these latter organizations would withdraw their
opposition if adequate protective measures would be guaranteed to protect the Rainbow Bridge National Monument and if no dam or reservoir to be constructed under the authorizing Act were to be built in any national park or monument. The pending legislation was amended in accordance with these terms by the proviso at the end of Section 1 and the last sentence of Section 3 of P. L. 485. As you are well aware, the Echo Park Storage Unit, for all practical purposes, was already lost to the legislation because the Bill could not be reported by the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee in 1955 with the Echo Park Dam included in it.

Ever since the agreement referred to above was consummated it has been the policy of our Commission to maintain a hands-off attitude as far as Echo Park is concerned, not only in order to honor the agreement, but also to make possible the concentration of efforts on getting the four presently authorized Storage Units (Glen Canyon, Navajo, Flaming Gorge and Curecanti) and the eleven authorized participating projects completed and the 25 other projects given priority in planning in P. L. 485 ready for construction as soon as possible. We do not mean that we are abandoning forever the idea of a Storage Unit at Echo Park. Echo Park is being reserved for future development. If the need becomes sufficiently acute and the circumstances are right, our four States and this Commission will again give unlimited support to this project.

Circumstances now are no more favorable to the chances of passage of legislation to authorize an Echo Park Dam than they were in 1956. In fact, the introduction of such a Bill in Congress would be untimely and could jeopardize the entire Upper Colorado River development program.

An Echo Park Bill would be a most effective stimulus to reviving the nation-wide opposition of the nature conservation organizations. You must remember that the membership and officials of these organizations have their most powerful influence in the Eastern, Southern, North Central States and in Southern California, areas that have sufficient representation in Congress to numerically outweigh many times the representation of our four Upper Division States. Good judgement dictates that it would be foolish to regenerate this opposition to the point where it might feel that it had reason to oppose the appropriations for projects we already have authorized, or to oppose the authorizations of other projects that we will be submitting to Congress for consideration in the near future. I would like to remind you that one of these will be another phase of the Central Utah Project in your own State.

The overall situation at this time is especially precarious due to the fact that Bills will be introduced in the 86th Congress to create a vast wilderness preservation system. Our four States are opposed to several features of these wilderness bills. Introduction of an Echo Park Bill would crystallize the forces supporting the wilderness bills and opposing Echo Park Dam so that we would have two nation-wide battles to fight against a stacked deck. How foolish can we be?
Hon. Wallace F. Bennett

With our nation confronted with a $12 billion deficit there is not much chance that many "new start" reclamation projects can be authorized. If Echo Park Dam were to be authorized, and the probabilities of that are "nil", there would be very little possibility of obtaining construction funds from Congress. Upper Colorado Projects for fiscal 1959 are requiring almost one-third of the total money appropriated for construction and rehabilitation of reclamation projects in the 17 Western States. During the next two years Upper Colorado projects will require an even higher percentage of the total for an economic rate of construction unless Congress will substantially increase the total appropriated for reclamation. We cannot afford to lose the support of other States interested in having reclamation projects by being accused of playing the role of "whole hog" in expecting the expenditures for Upper Colorado to attain an unreasonably large percentage of the total reclamation program.

We have another large Storage Unit, Curecanti in Western Colorado, and three participating projects, Smith Fork in Colorado, Hammond in New Mexico, and Seedskadee in Wyoming, that are authorized and will be ready for construction in fiscal 1960. If additional funds can be added to those appropriated for Upper Colorado projects currently under construction, they should go to these projects first.

If the opponents of Echo Park Dam were to be only partially effective in reducing appropriations for Glen Canyon Dam alone, and its completion were to be delayed for a year or two as a result, the cost of the entire Colorado River Storage Project would be increased by millions of dollars by the unnecessary accrual of interest during the longer construction period, by reduced power revenues to be returned to the Federal Treasury for defraying construction and interest costs, and by the reduced power revenues available to pay for participating projects like the Central Utah Project in your own State. It is apparent that the risk to the Colorado River Storage Project is too great to even consider trying to obtain the authorization of Echo Park Dam in the immediate future.

In summary, we are opposed to jeopardizing the entire Colorado River Storage Project by the interjection of the proposal to authorize the Echo Park Storage Unit.

As you know, Senator, I have worked closely in Washington for the past five years with all members of both political parties from our four States for the authorization of the Colorado River Storage Project and for appropriations of funds for its construction. I believe that I have a good understanding of the intense feelings that exist among informed parties both for and against Echo Park Dam. Also, I believe I know something about the difficulties encountered when seeking appropriations for reclamation projects. Therefore, I am shocked that this Echo Park question should be raised now and under existing conditions. I feel very strongly with respect to this issue that it is pertinent to adhere strictly to the precept that emotionalism should be renounced and reason allowed to prevail.

Sincerely yours,

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Ival V. Goslin
Engineer-Sec'y