The gravest threat to the national park system since its creation in 1916 was seen by the Sierra Club today in the recommendation of Secretary of the Interior McKay that a reclamation dam be built at Echo Park in Dinosaur National Monument in Utah.

No national park or monument will be safe from destruction if the action is allowed to stand, Richard M. Leonard, Club president, declared.

Leonard said, after an emergency meeting of Club officers, that the Club will proceed at once to organize a Dinosaur National Monument emergency committee to save the Monument from destruction and to enlist for this purpose the support of all Pacific Coast groups interested in conservation.

A concerted campaign by conservation organizations all over the country to save the Monument seems likely, with its first aim to have President Eisenhower reject Secretary McKay's Echo Park recommendation, Leonard said.

Dinosaur National Monument, about 275 miles east of Salt Lake City, was created in 1915 to preserve fossilized remains of the prehistoric monsters found there. It was later enlarged to 327 square miles in order to protect the remarkably scenic canyons of the Green and Yampa rivers.

More than 200 Club members who took a boat trip through the heart of the Monument last summer returned convinced it should be elevated to national park status.
"Dinosaur National Monument may seem remote, but so far as the overall threat of Secretary McKay's action is concerned, it is just as close to people all over the country as their nearest national park or monument. No national park or monument is safe from destruction if the action is allowed to stand.

"California, for example, has four national parks and eight national monuments. The same arguments used for invading Dinosaur could be used to liquidate them and all other parks in the nation.

"The puzzling feature of Secretary McKay's recommendation is that alternate dam sites are available that would provide fully as much power and water storage on the Upper Colorado River without destroying one of the most remarkable scenic assets in the entire park system.

"The Department of the Interior, charged by law with protecting the system, should be zealous in defending, not destroying, the national park idea, which has been the envy of the world ever since Abraham Lincoln set aside Yosemite as the first park for the nation.

"The Sierra Club has decided that saving this area, which would be made a national park under the provisions of a bill introduced at the last session by Congressman Leroy Johnson (R.Calif.) shall be Project No. 1 on the Club's list of priorities.

"With the population of the nation rapidly rising and shifting westward, we need more, not fewer, recreational areas. Everyone in the nation has a stake in this Dinosaur National Monument issue."

Specifically, Secretary McKay's recommendation, transmitted to President Eisenhower, called for construction by the U.S. Reclamation Service of a dam at Echo Park in Dinosaur National Monument as part of a billion dollar Upper Colorado River water storage project. The dam would flood the major scenic areas of the Monument.

12 17 53

###