IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SIERRA CLUB WARNS
ECHO PARK DAM WOULD CREATE UNSIGHTLY LAKE

The Sierra Club today warned conservationists and sportsmen all over the country that proponents of Echo Park Dam in Dinosaur National Monument are attempting to foist on the nation a vast, unsightly fluctuating reservoir as "tomorrow's playground."

The Club last year branded the Echo Park Dam proposal "the gravest threat to the national park system since its creation in 1916." It helped rally conservationists against the Upper Colorado River Project of which the dam is a part and contributed to blocking enactment of the Project in the 83d Congress.

Recently, the Upper Colorado River Commission, representing Utah, Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico, financed publication of an illustrated brochure entitled "Tomorrow's Playground," extolling to sportsmen and vacationists the claimed recreational advantages of the reservoir which Echo Park Dam would create.

Richard M. Leonard, San Francisco attorney who is Club president and spokesman, in a statement branded the brochure "sixteen pages of tax-supported misrepresentation."

"Far from being 'Tomorrow's Playground,'" said Leonard, "the reservoir behind Echo Park Dam would be a vast, unsightly, fluctuating reservoir which would be full only once every 30 or 40 years, drawn down to dead-storage level once in the same period and fluctuating between those levels the rest of the time.

"Horizontally, the drawback at periods of low water would be as much as 25 miles on the Green River arm of the reservoir and 13 miles on the Yampa arm. This area would be the primary deposition zone (MORE
for silt, sand and clay; it would be ooze when wet and cracked mud when dry. About 34,000 acres of stained, drowned and eroded landscape would be periodically exhumed.

"No permanent vegetation would grow within the fluctuation zone. Fish and wildlife would suffer accordingly. The bottom-lands and river shore which now constitute a natural setting would be permanently obliterated.

"It is not necessary to guess about the aftermath of an Echo Park Dam. The situation at Lake Mead, where progressively new low-level records are being set since the one time (1941) it nearly filled, speak for themselves.

"Last year, Congress was asked for $128,000 to adapt beach development there to the retreating lake in which growth of harmful bacteria required closing some beaches. The drawdown then was 88 feet. It is now 120 and is dropping toward a predicted 150 feet. Some lakeshore development has had to be abandoned. Silt averaging about 200 feet deep extends the 40-mile length of once-striking Lower Granite Gorge.

"The Secretary of the Interior has said 'What we have done at Lake Mead and in the Great Smokies is what we have in mind for Dinosaur.'

"We also have here in California Hetch Hetchy Reservoir inside Yosemite National Park. The same recreational claims were made for it before it was authorized in 1913. Yet not a single sports fishing boat is allowed on its surface. Sportsmen should not be deluded by the recreational claims for Echo Park Dam."

Leonard criticized another claim in the brochure -- that Echo Park Dam would provide "water and power for a growing West."
"Not one teacupful of water stored behind Echo Park Dam is destined for irrigation use in Utah, Colorado, Wyoming or New Mexico," Leonard asserted. "Its sole purpose is to store water for downstream delivery to Lower Basin States in conformity with the Colorado River Compact of 1922.

"Power would be developed at Echo Park Dam and revenues derived from its sale would be used to subsidize participating reclamation projects which would bring more farm land under cultivation.

"Power however can be developed more cheaply in the area at other sites not inside a national park or monument; by other means -- coal or possibly atomic energy, in a few years -- and closer to load centers, cutting costly transmission losses."