

January 20, 1919

Mr. Thomas D. Campbell,
Washington Bldg.,
Los Angeles, California.

My dear Mr. Campbell:

Confirming our conversation of Saturday, the following is a synopsis of the present and proposed water development for San Diego City and County:

San Diego has a population of from eighty-five to one hundred thousand people, not including the fifteen or twenty thousand Government men located in our aviation camps, Camp Kearny, Fort Rosecrans, and Balboa Park. It is safe to assume that San Diego is furnishing water daily to one hundred and fifteen thousand people.

In 1910 San Diego had forty-nine thousand inhabitants. We have more than doubled both in population and in use of water, yet no increase in water supply has been secured by the City.

San Diego's water supply consists of the so-called Spreckels system and pumping plants in the San Diego River. The City system includes Morena, Upper and Lower Otay dams and Barrett dam site marked in orange on the map herewith attached.

San Diego is now using an average of eleven million gallons daily the year through, while the hydraulic engineer of the State Railroad Commission has determined that the net safe yield of the City system, covering a period of twenty years, is less than seven million gallons daily, and with Barrett dam built, approximately nine million gallons.

The City's pumping plants in the San Diego River can develop three or four million gallons of water, good quality, daily for three or four months each year. After that a lower strata of water is encountered which is unfit for human consumption.

San Diego is bonded practically to its 15% limit and its surplus bonding capacity will all be taken in order to complete Barrett Dam and construct a new pipeline to the City from Lower Otay. Valuations within the

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City limits could be increased, thereby increasing the bonding limit and making other funds available if it were not for the fact that the assessed valuation today is so high that in many cases our best property will not sell for the assessed valuation if disposed of by private sale or public auction.

The future for San Diego's growth is bright. We are this year completing the San Diego & Arizona Railroad from Yuma to San Diego. We also have many Governmental activities, wonderful State and County paved highways, marvelous development of our back country, Imperial Valley, which produced last year fifty million dollars worth of produce. The development of the San Dieguito Mutual Water Company system, as shown on the map in green, will irrigate approximately twenty-five thousand acres. All of this development, together with our climate and natural attractions, undoubtedly means increased growth in population for San Diego City and County provided there is an increased supply of water. There are only two ways to get this: by buying from private corporations, or through a formation of a district.

The Sweetwater Water Company (in purple) at times have a small surplus of water for sale, and the Cuyamaca Water Company (in brown) also have a surplus, but the combined surplus of both private water companies can not take care of the growing needs of the City without large expenditures in water development.

San Diego could go to Tia Juana River for a pumping proposition, and probably develop five million gallons of water daily, but a perpetual typhoid condition exists there. A portion of the water bearing gravels of the Tia Juana River are in Mexico; also serious litigation could be expected from riparian owners below, whose water supply might be seriously affected by the installation of the City's pumping plants above.

The boundary line of the City of San Diego extends from National City to Del Mar, a distance of twenty-five or thirty miles. There are probably thirty thousand acres of tillable mesa lands within the limits of San Diego, as near frostless as any in the United States, that with water for irrigation and domestic purposes would be an invaluable asset to the City. At present it is only brush land, and with our slight rainfall it is

hard to produce any profitable crops. As an agricultural proposition the lands are hardly worth twenty dollars an acre without water. With water, however, they are easily worth from three to five hundred dollars an acre, and can be leased for twenty or thirty dollars an acre annually, not including the cost of water, for truck gardening such as the raising of winter vegetables: tomatoes, peas, beans and cabbage. The crops mature in December, January and February with water, and there can be two crops raised annually from these lands. I am referring particularly to the Linda Vista Mesa of fifty to sixty thousand acres, lying north of the City of San Diego, with Camp Kearny in the center of the tract. A part of said lands are within the City limits of San Diego, and the balance outside.

Along the coast San Diego gets only about nine inches of rain annually. Sometimes this drops to four or five inches. Forty or sixty miles inland, the average rainfall is thirty to fifty inches.

It is an expensive undertaking to impound these waters by means of dams and bring them to the coast. In this way only is it possible for us to reclaim our semi-arid lands.

I have been identified actively with the water development of San Diego County since 1915, and am convinced that the best solution of this water problem is by means of a large district: the district to include the City of San Diego, East San Diego, La Mesa, National City, Chula Vista, the Linda Vista Mesa, and other suburban lands as well as the Otay Mesa possibly to the Tia Juana Valley. The District should include one hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand acres, and when organized it should vote forty year bonds bearing 6% interest, same payable only for twenty years, and thereafter one twentieth of the principal paid each year. The District should then acquire the Sweetwater system, Cuyamaca system and Volcan system, so-called (shown in red,) and possibly the system of the City of San Diego as well.

In all probability the owners of these systems would be willing to take forty year bonds at par for their systems, the valuation to be placed on the systems by the State Engineer of California, W. F. McClure, and approved by the State Bonding Commission. These bonds would

then be as good as any in the State.

The Volcan system, so-called, is controlled by W. G. Henshaw and I represent his interests in this County. The San Dieguito Mutual Water Company is controlled by the Santa Fe Railroad Company and W. G. Henshaw, and I am president of this system. The Cuyamaca Water Company is owned by J. A. Murray of Butte, Montana, W. G. Henshaw and myself. The Sweetwater system, as you know, is owned by J. P. Morgan & Co.

The San Dieguito Mutual Water Company is practically sold to an irrigation district of twenty-five thousand acres, extending along the coast from Oceanside to Del Mar, as delineated on map attached. The State Engineer's valuation of the San Dieguito system is satisfactory to us and to a large majority of the property owners within the proposed district for, after knowing what price they would have to pay for the system, there were only two negative votes cast for the formation of the district.

Negotiations have been on for some time to form an irrigation district consisting of forty-three thousand acres, between Oceanside and Escondido. The plan being to purchase Warners dam and bring the water from that point to the proposed irrigation district between Oceanside and Escondido, as shown on said map herewith attached. The State Engineer was asked to make a report on the valuation of our present holdings, and his report has been made, giving a valuation which is satisfactory to us. At a mass meeting held last week, at which the State Engineer's report was made public, it was unanimously agreed to form the district and acquire the Warners Dam site and water to be impounded therein.

If this district is formed and the Warners project absorbed by the proposed San Luis Rey Irrigation District just above described, then the only water properties which a large irrigation district (including the City of San Diego) could acquire from the Volcan system, so-called, would be the Sutherland, Pamo and San Clements reservoir sites and water rights, the Cuyamaca system and the Sweetwater system. If the San Luis Rey district was not formed, the Warners development could and should be included, for with all the water possibilities fully developed, we have a great deal more land than we have water for.

Three different engineers employed by the City

have already recommended to the City that the Volcan system be acquired. At present the Volcan system consists of the acquisition of dam sites and reservoir lands flooded, riparian rights on the San Luis Rey river from Warners dam for fifty-four miles to the ocean, also approximately one hundred thousand dollars spent in construction work at Warners dam site, which was personally visited by you with Mr. Treanor and myself. It includes also, most of the Riparian rights from Pamo dam site to the ocean. It is absolutely necessary to acquire these rights in the State of California, in order to legally divert water from one water shed to another. The San Clemente reservoir site adjoining the Linda Vista Mesa and the City of San Diego, as shown on said map attached, is at an elevation of nearly seven hundred feet above sea level; and water will flow by gravity into the Lower Otay and Sweetwater dams, the elevation of Sweetwater being 142 feet and of Lower Otay 400 feet. Water will also flow by gravity over the entire City of San Diego from San Clemente. This, however, is not the case with water from the Sweetwater and Lower Otay dams. 6000 to 7000 H.P. of electricity can also be developed on the Volcan system.

The Cuyamaca Water system is only partially developed. It includes the Cuyamaca reservoir, Murray reservoir, Crossmont reservoir, Eucalyptus reservoir and a flume line thirty two miles in length, with a capacity of twenty million gallons daily which, by means of diverting dams, diverts the flow to that extent of the water of the San Diego River into the last three mentioned reservoirs, or direct into the City mains and to its consumers. The flume line at La Mesa is at an elevation of six hundred thirty feet above sea level and distant approximately seven miles from the City limits of San Diego.

It is practicable to build two additional dams at least on the Cuyamaca system, one adjoining the diverting dam on the San Diego River and one adjoining the diverting dam on the South Fork, at both of which points we are today and have for thirty-five years been continuously diverting water from the San Diego River through our system.

The Cuyamaca system, in the early days when it was known as the San Diego Flume Company, sold water rights, so-called, and at a very low figure. The annual charges for delivery of water were so low that it meant

confiscation of the property, and the Railroad Commission of the State of California in 1913 canceled the old rates and increased same somewhat. But today the system is hardly paying operating expenses on rates established, although it is hoped that the State Railroad Commission will give an increase of rates which will make it a paying investment at an early date.

Negotiations are now on to sell the Cuyamaca system to the La Mesa Irrigation District which is comprised of fourteen thousand acres of land. The State Engineer is now placing a valuation on this system, but there is no certainty that it will be sold to the district.

The Cuyamaca system has a strategic value which should not be overlooked. The distance from the Cuyamaca Flume at La Mesa to the Sweetwater dam is approximately four miles, and to a connection with the pipe line of the City of San Diego at Lower Otay, approximately three miles further.

The San Diego River produces a larger volume of water than the Sweetwater and Otay water sheds combined, and if under one management, the Cuyamaca system could be of much value in delivering surplus water into Sweetwater and Otay reservoirs so as to materially affect the carrying of said Otay and Sweetwater systems through a series of dry years. During my activities and under my personal observation, we have had as many as eight years when there was not enough rainfall to even take care of the evaporation from our reservoirs, to say nothing of additional catchment. This was in 1897 to 1905, and the same thing applies to 1910 to 1915. These periods of drought are bound to return.

The Sweetwater system, as you know, is owned by the Morgan interests. The former owners acquired the lands, sold same with water, and made a profit on the lands. There is very little surplus water for sale in excess of the present needs in the community which Sweetwater furnishes. It is possible that in wet years another dam could be built higher up on the river to impound additional water, but controversy will arise concerning riparian rights below, and it is a question whether enough water could be impounded to warrant the expense of building another dam and pipe line, for without question it will, in addition, cost a considerable sum to get the consent of the riparian owners below, making the water very expensive.

There is no doubt in my mind but what the Railroad Commission of the State of California will be more severe in its valuation and will allow less income to the Sweetwater system than to any other system in San Diego County, owing to the fact that it was a real estate scheme from the beginning, the former owners thereby making a large profit from the sale of their lands. This is not the case with any other system in the County.

Today we find three or four independent water systems in San Diego, all of which should be under one management, which would materially cut down operating expenses, and water could be interchanged when either system has a surplus. Today there is a large surplus of water going to the ocean, both on the San Diego River and the Volcan system, which if properly developed could practically all be put into the Sweetwater and Lower Otay dams.

Mr. J. D. Spreckels has informed me personally that he favors a water district for the City of San Diego. He owns large property interests on the Lower Otay Mesa, between the Sweetwater and Lower Otay dams, which can not at present get gravity water excepting from the Cuyamaca or Volcan systems. This also applies to his holdings of lands on the Linda Vista Mesa north of the City of San Diego.

Mr. Harry Payne Whitney, W. G. Henshaw and myself have large interests on the Linda Vista Mesa, as well as have Mr. Murray and myself around La Mesa. These lands can only be irrigated by gravity from the Volcan and Cuyamaca systems.

J. P. Morgan & Co. own large property interests on the Linda Vista Mesa, and their holdings are particularly large around the Sweetwater territory and Otay Mesa. These lands of J. P. Morgan & Co. cannot be irrigated by gravity excepting from the Volcan and Cuyamaca systems, unless from a new dam constructed on the Sweetwater river.

As you can easily find out, there is very little surplus water that can be developed from the Sweetwater system, which is not true of the Cuyamaca and Volcan systems.

Under all the circumstances, it seems to me the different interests I have just mentioned should get

together and plan a large water district embracing the lands which will make a greater San Diego, possibly a City and County Government combined. By getting our water development under one management, all the lands heretofore described will get gravity water, the water systems will be sold at a face valuation made by the State Engineer, and the lands that we all own which are today practically valueless, can be easily disposed of at from three to five hundred dollars an acre, with water.

I wish you would think this matter over. I hope to see you interested and would appreciate any suggestions you have to offer. A copy of this letter has been sent to Mr. Henshaw and also Mr. Treanor.

Believe me,

Very sincerely yours,

EF/F/cma

cc WOH
JT

Ed Fletcher Papers

1870-1955

MSS.81

Box: 72 Folder: 12

**Writings and Interviews - Water History - Synopsis
of the San Diego county water development,
for Thomas D. Campbell of Los Angeles**



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