EXHIBIT 5

Letter dated June 19, 1900 to Commissioner of Indian Affairs
from Frank Conser

30668 | OFFICE OF Indian Affairs Rec JUN 23 | 1900

Carson, Nevada
June 19, 1900

Frank M. Conser,
Supt. Ind. Schs.

Rept. rel. to disposition
of Walker River
Reservation, Nevada

3 Inc

Mr. Oliver returns the
to say look about
Aug. 1/06

File

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Carson, Nev., June I9th., I900.

The Honorable Commissioner of Indian Affairs:-

Sir:-

In compliance with instructions of Feb. 26th., I900 to proceed to Walker River Reservation, Nevada, for the purpose of examining the character of that reservation and ascertaining about the quantity of allottable lands situated therein etc., I have to report that I have gone over this reservation personally and find that the most suitable land for allotment is that lying along the Walker River, North and West of Walker Lake, there being about 8000 acres that can be placed under ditch. Possibly from 2000 to 4000 acres of mesa land in addition to the above could be covered by ditch but this could only be determined after a careful survey by a competent engineer.

The land suitable for allotment according to the map sent to me and returned herewith marked Exhibit "A" would be situated in the N.E. of Township I2, the BI/2 of Tp. I3, the S.E. of Tp. I4, Range 28, the N.W. corner of Tp. I2, and the Western and Southwestern part of Tp. I3 Range 29. The townships in which the land lies, according to this map, are marked with a cross(+) in red ink.

I inclose another map marked Exhibit "B" which was prepared after I had personally examined the land and which shows the location of that which can be covered by a ditch and which should be surveyed if it is decided to allot the same to the Indians. This land lies North and West of Walker Lake and along Walker River a distance of from one-half mile to two miles from the river and extends up the river about nine miles from the lake. I would describe the out-boundaries of the land to be surveyed

as follows: Begin at the mouth of the river, thence N.E. about 3&1/2 miles, thence Northwesterly about 3 miles; thence Westerly about 3 miles to a point about N.E. of the agency where the bluff of the mesa extends to the river bottom; thence Northwesterly along the bluffs of the mesa, so as to include all river-bottom lands, to the upper dam marked on the map. This will include about all the land on the East and North side of the river. On the South and West side of the river, begin at a point on the lake about one mile West of the mouth of the river;,thence Northwesterly to a point about 3/4 mile S.E. of the agency; thence Westerly about two miles; thence Northerly to the upper dam marked on map. The land should be surveyed in 20 acre tracts and should not be allotted in quantities greater than 20 acres to any individual Indian as 20 acres of good agricultural land under irrigation is an abundance for any Indian on this reservation. When I talked to the head men of the tribe relative to allotting in 20 acre tracts they interposed no objection to such a course and I am sure it will be satisfactory to them.

At present there are about 400 Indians on the reservation although I presume there are fully 600 who claim the reservation as their home but on account of the scarcity of water and the limited amount of land that can be irrigated many of them have been compelled to leave in order to make a living,,although it would be better for the Indians if they could be kept on the reservation because of the evil influences surrounding them in the towns they frequent. There are about 100 now living at the town of Hawthorne on the Southern border of the reservation where their condition is deplorable and there is absolutely nothing at that place to encourage them in the way of better living. On the contrary their money is largely spent for whiskey and opium, women and girls lead lives of

prostitution and men women and children frequent the Chinese opium dens. The sentiment of the white people at this place is generally expressed that the best Indians are dead and the living are only good for what can be made out of them.

All of the Indians belonging to the reservation should be compelled to reside thereon if it were possible for them to make a living there but in fact the surveying and allotting of land to them on the reservation in addition to what is now being cultivated will be a useless expenditure of money unless they are assured of a sufficient amount of water to enable them to raise a crop and the only way to do this is to provide a means of storing the surplus that comes down the Walker River during the spring months. When the snow in the mountains melts in the spring there is always an abundance of water in the river that cannot be utilized but as soon as the snow is gone, usually about the middle of June, the supply in the river on the reservation diminishes very rapidly, generally by about the middle of July the river is dry and year by year the regular supply from the river is gradually diminishing because of the increased appropriation of the water in the valleys above the reservation. I observed this particularly in Mason Valley which adjoins the reservation on the West where new land is being broken, new ditches are being constructed and old ones extended and enlarged.

The only way of assuring these Indians of a permanent supply of water for the land they should have under irrigation is by a storage reservoir. There are two sites where a storage dam could be built, one about one-half mile above the present upper dam and another about two miles above. At either site it would require a dam about 1000 feet in length and at a height of 20 feet the water would extend back about two miles. At the lower site the reservoir would have an average width of about

1500 ft. while at the upper site the area covered would be considerably larger.

A reasonable estimate of the cost of such a dam could only be made after a careful examination of the dam site but I would approximate the cost at not less than $50000. It would also be necessary to run a main ditch from the reservoir on each side of the river to reach the land to be irrigated and the length of each ditch from the dam to the lake would be about ten miles. The approximate cost of these ditches would be $10000.00.

It will thus be seen that to place these Indians on a safe road toward self-support will require an expenditure of not less than $60000.00, which amount I presume is not available from any general fund and to meet this condition I submit the following solution.

The land within the boundaries of the reservation is estimated at about 320,000 acres. The only land of any value to the Indians is that situated along the river bottom. The balance of the reservation consists of mountains and sage-brush land. An examination of the mountain country to the West which contains the only mountain range the Indians receive any benefit from, shows that there is some pine timber thereon but I saw none that was of any commercial value whatever except for firewood and for this there is no available market at present. The only real benefit derived by the Indians from the timber is the pine-nuts which they gather in the fall and which constitute a part of their subsistence but if they had other and better means of subsistence the loss of the pine-nuts would be rather insignificant. And in fact they could probably secure pine-nuts just as well if the mountains were not within the boundaries of the reservation.

This mountain range to the West however is thought to contain

valuable mineral and the country is much coveted by the white people who are at present excluded from performing mining operations on the reservation. I observed evidences of prospecting in many places and if reports are true some valuable mines could no doubt be developed if the country was open to mineral entry. The mineral in the mountain is doing the Indians no good and if they could be reasonably compensated for the land and the money spent in a way that would benefit them I would favor their disposing of the land that is of no present value and appropriating the money derived therefrom for the construction of a storage reservoir, irrigating ditches, purchase of cattle, farm implements etc., which will be of some real benefit to them, and would recommend the diminishing of the reservation to about 75000acres and within about the following boundaries as shown by red ink lines on map marked Exhibit "C" viz:-

Begin on the East side of Walker Lake at a point on the railroad known as Gillis Station which is about eight miles from the mouth of the river; thence Northerly to a mountain point about five miles N.E. of the mouth of the river; thence Northwesterly to a point about one mile east of the site for a reservoir which is on the river about ten miles from its mouth; thence follow the meanderings of the river at least one mile from the river to the present reservation line; thence follow down the river on the opposite side about the same distance therefrom to a point about one mile West of the reservoir site; thence Southerly to the foot of White Mountain; thence follow the foot-hills to a point on the West shore of the lake, opposite Gillis Station; thence across the lake to the place of beginning. The surplus land I would recommend be sold for $125000.00(about 50 cents per acre) a part of which amount could be used for the benefit of the Indians as above indicated, a part should be used for inclosing the diminished reservation with a good wire

fence and the balance placed to the credit of the tribe to be expended under the direction of the Department. My object in including a part of the lake within the diminished reservation would be to insure to the Indians a protection of their rights to fish in at least a portion of the lake as well as an undisturbed use of that part of the lake for any other purpose.

The fencing of the diminished reservation I should consider very important for the protection of the river bottom from outside cattle and the insurance of good grazing land for Indian cattle.

I would also consider the retention of the entire river bottom within the diminished reservation as very important for two reasons; viz (I) to protect the Indians against the appropriation of water from the river above the reservoir as the land all along the river would be settled upon immediately after it was thrown open to settlement, thus increasing the amount of water taken from the river and diminishing the reservation supply; (2) to provide a common pasture for the Indians. When Sup't. Allen and I rode up the river bottom from the lake to the reservation line we counted 450 head of cattle that were grazing in this bottom and with proper guidance and protection of their interests there is no reason why the Indians could not have at least that number of cattle which would be a source of considerable revenue to them.

After having studied the whole matter carefully I am convinced that for the best interests of the Indians it would be advisable to diminish the reservation and with the money derived from the sale of the surplus lands provide for the survey, allotment and irrigation of the agricultural land retained and the support of the Indians as above indicated.

Very respectfully,

Frank M. Conner,
Sup. Ind. Schs.