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July 16, 2019

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Office of the Governor  
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Getting more value from Yosemite's Hetch Hetchy

Dear Governor Newsom:

*Valuing Hetch Hetchy Valley*, the enclosed report by a highly respected economic consulting firm, demonstrates that restoring this famous valley in Yosemite National Park could generate recreational values in the \$100 million-per-year range in private spending alone. The report concludes further that the total increase in public value could exceed \$100 billion over time.

We invite the State of California, and its appropriate agencies, to review this report, and to consider public dialogue that would explore its findings and would investigate the water system improvements that are necessarily a part of any restoration plan. (Long-standing analyses have shown that, with modest system improvements, restoration can be feasibly accomplished without San Francisco, the reservoir's owner, losing a single drop of water supply.)

*Valuing Hetch Hetchy Valley: Economics Benefits of Restoration in Yosemite National Park*, was prepared by ECONorthwest, the Pacific Northwest's largest economic consulting firm. ECONorthwest considered a variety of visitor use scenarios without any assumption of infrastructure development within the valley itself. Restore Hetch Hetchy commissioned the study, but played no part in its analysis.

The study shows that the recreational value of a restored valley could be as much as \$178 million per year: \$62 million/year in visitor spending inside Yosemite National Park, \$65 million/year in spending outside the park, and \$51 million/year in additional consumer surplus. These gains are dwarfed by the additional public values in passive use, including option values, bequest values and existence values, which the report finds could reach \$100 billion for Americans alone.

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We believe this new analysis reinforces the case for restoration and is consistent with recent polling data, conducted by Probolsky Research, which found that support for Hetch Hetchy Valley restoration outnumbered opposition by more than 3 to 1.

Hetch Hetchy Valley was dammed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and now lies buried beneath 300 feet of water and is unavailable to Yosemite National Park visitors – the only such destruction that has ever occurred in any U.S. national park.

The City of San Francisco promised Congress at the time that recreation at Hetch Hetchy would be enhanced by the reservoir, but reneged on this commitment long ago. Today, the City continues to reimburse the U.S. taxpayer only \$30,000 per year (NOT a typo; a fee so miniscule as to be embarrassing to all concerned) for the privilege of using an iconic landscape in Yosemite National Park for its municipal benefit.

A robust investigation which considers restoration of Hetch Hetchy Valley is long overdue and, as this study reconfirms, very much in the public's interest. A collaborative effort, to compare the cost of replacing the water supply function of the reservoir to the benefits of restoring Yosemite's Hetch Hetchy Valley to its natural splendor, is warranted.

The State of California plays an important role in the management of all water and public land within its boundaries, including that controlled by the federal government. Solutions for providing water supplies to cities and farms are essential as we confront a future with increased population, depleted aquifers and uncertain hydrology. Our public lands, and especially our parks, are, however, more popular than ever and warrant the best possible stewardship.

We ask the State of California to investigate the decision made by Congress a century ago, and to recommend whether it is in the public interest to return Hetch Hetchy Valley to Yosemite National Park and to the American people.

Thank you for your attention to this extraordinary opportunity.

Respectfully,



Spreck Rosekrans  
Executive Director

Cc: Wade Crowfoot, Secretary, California Department of Natural Resources  
Jared Blumenfeld, Secretary, California, Environmental Protection Agency  
Karla Nemeth, Director, California Department of Natural Resources  
Charlton Bonham, Director, California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Joaquin Esquivel, Chair, California State Water Resources Control Board