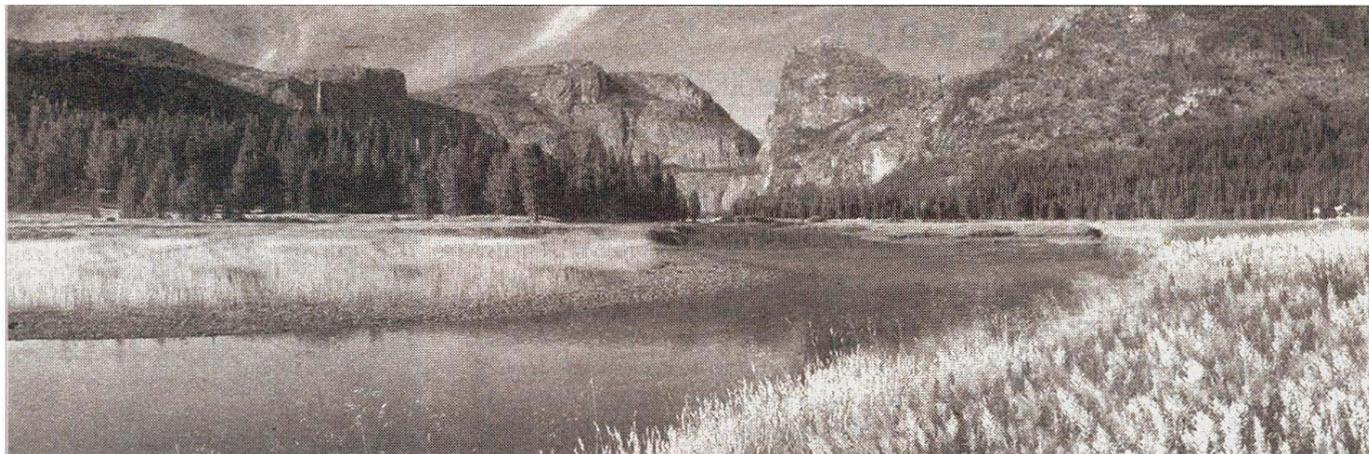


Restore a national treasure: Yosemite's Hetch Hetchy Valley



Vision of a restored Hetch Hetchy Valley. By Greg Richardson, LevelPar/Environmental Defense

Today's headlines hark back to earliest Sierra Club history. The newly minted California quarter features Club founder John Muir, walking-stick in hand, gazing up at Half Dome in Yosemite. At a time when America's rush westward left little concern for conservation, Muir led the effort to protect Yosemite Valley and the surrounding wilderness area as a national park.

And on Nov. 8 the Schwarzenegger administration announced that it would launch an investigation of the possible decommissioning of the O'Shaughnessy Dam and restoration of Hetch Hetchy Valley. Muir spent the last years of his life leading the Sierra Club in a bitter and ultimately unsuccessful fight to block San Francisco's proposal to build this dam, which turned Yosemite's gorgeous Hetch Hetchy Valley into a reservoir.

The original battle to save Hetch Hetchy Valley was an epiphany for the American public and a call to action for the Sierra Club. In the early 20th century the Sierra Club was primarily an outings club, but the damming of Hetch Hetchy made it clear we would need to fight continually to protect even our most spectacular natural heritage from unwise development.

Today new hope has arisen for restoring Hetch Hetchy Valley. As San Francisco embarks on a \$3.6 billion overhaul of its water-supply infrastructure (see article following page), attention is once again focused on the sacrifice that Yosemite National Park made to provide water storage for San Francisco

and other Bay Area communities. Restore Hetch Hetchy, an aptly named grassroots organization, has told and retold the Hetch Hetchy story to the public, the media, and elected officials since its founding in 1999, while promoting environmentally sound alternatives. A study in 1988 by President Reagan's Department of Interior brought the idea of restoration to public attention. New studies by Environmental Defense and UC Davis have broadened the appeal of the valley's restoration by demonstrating that practical alternatives are available.

On Sep. 27, Environmental Defense released a 285-page report titled "Paradise Regained: Solutions for Restoring Yosemite's Hetch Hetchy Valley". The study, compiled with the assistance of three distinguished consulting firms, examines options for continuing San Francisco's reliable supply of high-quality Tuolumne River water and hydropower without storing water in Yosemite National Park. It concludes that other system reservoirs could provide 96% of the water currently delivered to Bay Area communities, and estimates the total cost of water and power replacement, including both capital and operating costs, to be between \$500 million and \$1.65 billion.

Between Aug. 22 and Sep. 20, the *Sacramento Bee* published an extraordinary nine-part editorial series calling for Hetch Hetchy's restoration. Support for restoration is growing among government officials as well. Assemblymembers Lois Wolk (D-Vacaville), Joe Canciamilla (D-Martinez), and Tim

Leslie (R-Roseville) took the lead in persuading the Schwarzenegger administration to prepare its own independent review of all these studies. Establishing a public forum to investigate restoring Hetch Hetchy is an unprecedented and important step, as no solution will be acceptable unless it addresses the legitimate concerns of San Francisco and other communities that currently depend on the Tuolumne River for water and hydropower.

With the interest of the Schwarzenegger administration, other elected officials, and the media, plus a sharp focus on water and power alternatives, momentum may finally be on Hetch Hetchy's side. Support from the environmental community will be essential, however, to educate our leaders and encourage them to pursue restoration.

A century ago Hetch Hetchy's granite cliffs, tumbling waterfalls, and flowering meadows inspired Muir to praise the valley as "one of nature's rarest and most precious mountain temples", an "exact counterpart" to nearby Yosemite, shaped by the same glacial forces. Today San Francisco's upgrade of its water system provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to consider practical alternatives to maintaining a reservoir in Hetch Hetchy Valley.

Larry Fahn, Sierra Club president; and Tom Graff, California regional director for Environmental Defense

What You Can Do

Hetch Hetchy has played a key role in the history of the Sierra Club. Restoration of Hetch Hetchy Valley would restore one of the gems of our National Park System to the American people while paying the ultimate tribute to John Muir. Club members interested in helping should contact the Club's state water chair Dan Sullivan at (415) 626-8153 or by email dansullivan63@earthlink.net.

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and the business-oriented Bay Area Council are fanning out through the Bay Area, seeking endorsements for their position that even studying the removal of the dam is not worthwhile. We need to build public support for our position that the dam should be removed. Restore Hetch Hetchy seeks volunteers who can approach local non-profit organizations and

government agencies and present the case for restoring Hetch Hetchy. RHH can provide you with a video, a slide/PowerPoint presentation, and fact sheets. If you can devote even one evening every month or two, you could make a big difference. To volunteer, contact RHH by email ron@hetchhetchy.org or (415) 987-9944.

For more information on the history of Hetch Hetchy Valley and solutions for its restoration, please visit: www.sierraclub.org/ca/hetchhetchy (Sierra Club Hetch Hetchy Restoration Task Force); www.hetchhetchy.org (Restore Hetch Hetchy); and www.discoverhetchhetchy.org (Environmental Defense).

Board meeting, reception, silent auction, day hike

May 21 and 22. Attend a weekend of events relating to the potential to restore Hetch Hetchy Valley - at the Evergreen Lodge, on Evergreen Road (one mile before the Big Oak Flat entrance to Yosemite on Route 120, about a half mile from Camp Mather). The Lodge is giving a discounted rate to people attending the event; tell the reservation clerks that you are with Restore Hetch Hetchy. Lodge contact information: (800) 935-6343 fax: (209) 379-2606

info@evergreenlodge.com

www.evergreenlodge.com

On Sat., May 21, the Sierra Club's Hetch Hetchy Restoration Task Force and the Board of Directors of the independent Restore Hetch Hetchy will meet jointly during the day. Beginning early Saturday evening, we will host a reception at the Evergreen Lodge, which will feature wine, cheese, and good munchies; our award-winning documentary film "Hetch Hetchy: Yosemite's Lost Valley"; and a presentation regarding our restoration Feasibility Study by our technical/engineering team. We'll also have a silent auction of art and photography with beautiful wildlife and outdoor images and other exciting items.

On Sunday morning, May 22, a Yosemite National Park interpretive ranger will lead us on a day trip to Hetch Hetchy to learn about the natural history of the area and to enjoy the spectacular waterfalls (Tueeulala and Wapama), great granite walls, and wildflowers. This is not a Sierra Club-sponsored outing.

For more information contact Harold Wood by email Harold.wood@sierraclub.org or (559) 739-8527.

□□□