



# Newsletter

Fall 2020

## Your vision of restoration?

*The mission of Restore Hetch Hetchy is to return the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park to its natural splendor while continuing to meet the water and power needs of all communities that depend on the Tuolumne River.*

We believe a restored valley can work for wildlife and people alike, but without the infrastructure and traffic that so often diminishes the visitor experience in Yosemite Valley.

Beyond this simple principle, restoration poses many questions. Restore Hetch Hetchy is asking supporters to provide their views. **What do you think restoration should look like?**

1. Should there be roads in the restored valley? If so, should private automobiles be allowed? Hetch Hetchy Valley is about 8 miles long – how should visitors go from one place to another?
2. Should camping or lodging be available within the valley? Adjacent to the valley? Or should these services only be available miles away?
3. Should the National Park Service provide shuttle service to Hetch Hetchy?
4. What should we do with the dam? Remove it entirely? “Breach” it, allowing the Tuolumne river to pass through and use the dam as a foundation for lodging?

Let us know what you think. Fill out the short survey at our (new) website – [hetchhetchy.org](https://hetchhetchy.org), or send an email to [spreck@hetchhetchy.org](mailto:spreck@hetchhetchy.org).

**By restoring Hetch Hetchy we can make a better Yosemite.**



Image: Garrett Burke

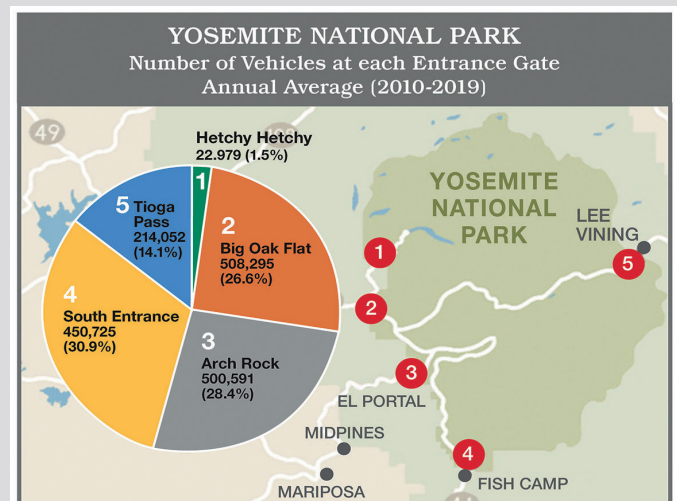
## The Hetch Hetchy Loop Road and why it matters

**Today, barely one percent of the cars entering Yosemite National Park are headed for Hetch Hetchy.**

It wasn't intended to be that way, even after Congress passed the Raker Act – infamously allowing San Francisco to build a reservoir in Hetch Hetchy Valley. San Francisco promised Congress the Hetch Hetchy area would be used “for park purposes and for water supply purposes”, that there would be “no reason to exclude campers and picnickers”.

The Raker Act also required San Francisco to construct specific roads and trails as most of Yosemite National Park was largely inaccessible at the time. The composition and location of these roads and trails, however, became a bone of contention between the Park Service and the City in the 1920s.

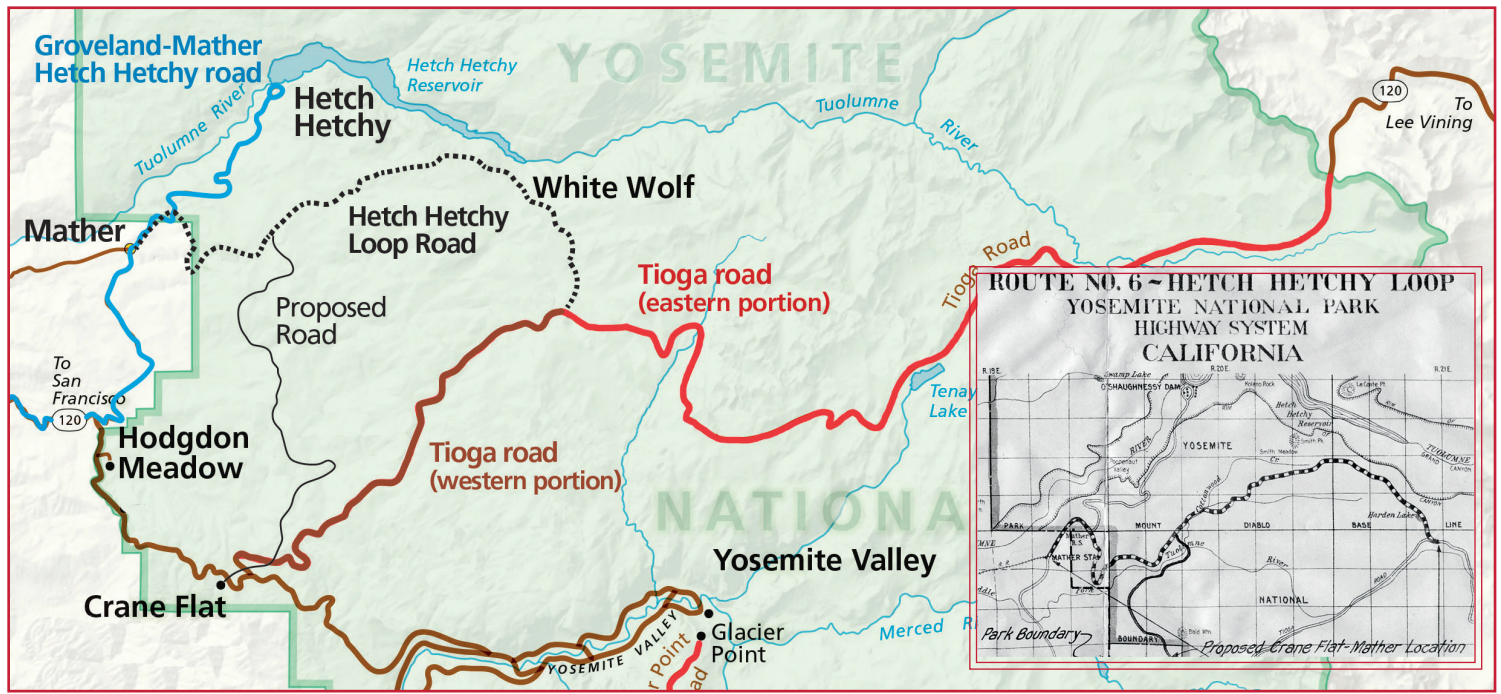
In 1930, the Secretary of Interior summoned National Park Service and San Francisco officials to Washington, DC, where the parties resolved their dispute. The agreement, however, allowed San Francisco to ignore its obligation to build the Hetch Hetchy Loop Road and the Park Service to reallocate funds elsewhere—in violation of the Raker Act's express mandate.



*Barely 1% of cars entering Yosemite pass through the Hetch Hetchy gate. The Yosemite Area Regional Transit System provides bus service through the park's other 4 entrances, but does not take visitors to Hetch Hetchy.*



## The Hetch Hetchy Loop Road continued



**The Hetch Hetchy Loop Road was never built — a violation of the Raker Act as explained in letters between federal officials in 1938 and 1940.**

The Hetch Hetchy Loop Road would have directed much of Yosemite's future automobile traffic along a more northerly route, closer to Hetch Hetchy and with a scenic overlook into the Hetch Hetchy Canyon near Smith Peak. Instead, Interior reallocated funds received from San Francisco to build the Tioga Road along a more southerly route – effectively cutting Hetch Hetchy off from the rest of the park.

The lack of access to Hetch Hetchy serves San Francisco well. As a whole, park visitors stay away. Hetch Hetchy is in a remote corner of Yosemite, with few recreational opportunities, and a gate that is often closed. By denying visitor access, the general public does not see the spectacular canyon, does not ask why the valley is drowned by the reservoir, and is not demanding restoration.

***Restore Hetch Hetchy is not recommending the Hetch Hetchy Loop Road be built—in spite of the century–old decree to do so. Until the reservoir is relocated and the valley restored, however, the National Park Service has a long overdue Obligation to provide the public with improved access and recreational opportunities in the Hetch Hetchy area.***

## San Francisco's water system improvements

Before Hetch Hetchy reservoir can be emptied and the valley restored, San Francisco needs to make system improvements to ensure there is no loss of supply. Restore Hetch Hetchy is updating previous analysis to reflect updated technologies, laws and water policy and will share that analysis with lawmakers. All the improvements are well within the scope of investments that other California water agencies have made in recent years.

**Conveyance** – Without Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, San Francisco will still have substantial storage in the Tuolumne watershed, but will need additional interties to withdraw supplies from storage in Cherry Reservoir or its water bank in Don Pedro Reservoir.

**Incremental supply** – Even without Hetch Hetchy Reservoir San Francisco will have ample supply in most years. To assure no loss of reliability during extended droughts, however, some additional investment will be needed – most likely by banking groundwater, expanding local storage, or recycling wastewater.

**Filtration** – San Francisco presently treats its water with chloramine (chlorine and ammonia) and ultraviolet light. It filters only about 30% of its overall supply as it is not required to filter water flowing directly to customers from Hetch Hetchy Reservoir. Restoration is likely to require that all Tuolumne River supplies be filtered – **something virtually all water agencies routinely do.**

Restore Hetch Hetchy takes a rational and scientific approach when it comes to fixing San Francisco's water system. We are committed to working with citizens and leaders alike in San Francisco to improve its water infrastructure so the valley can be restored without losing a drop of supply.



Restoration is likely to require that **the Sunol Valley Water Treatment Plant** (above) is expanded so all Tuolumne River supplies can be filtered. In spite of the Raker Act's express provision to the contrary, San Francisco continues to resist the cost of expansion. San Francisco uses its current filtration exemption as an excuse not only to oppose restoration of the valley but also to prevent visitors from camping near the reservoir or boating on its waters – directly contradicting promises made to Congress when the Raker Act was passed.



**People:** Restore Hetch Hetchy is grateful to the people below for all they are doing to restore Yosemite's Hetch Hetchy to its natural splendor.



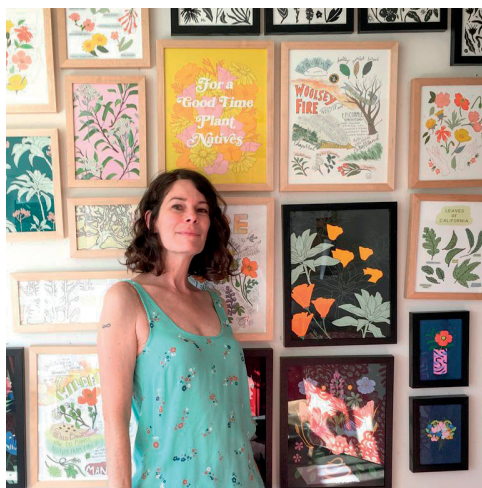
**Libby McLaren** recorded her own special rendition of *Hooray for Hetch Hetchy* on the 4th of July. You'll love her piano, her voice and her spirit. Libby is also a proud graduate of John Muir Elementary in Berkeley – class of 1967. Libby's music is available at [flowerandmclaren.com](http://flowerandmclaren.com). Libby's video, posted at [hetchhetchy.org](http://hetchhetchy.org), was created by Michael Sexton ([sextonarts.com](http://sextonarts.com)).



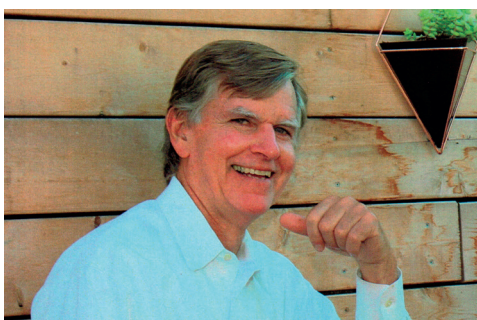
**Jenner Fox** ([jennerfox.com](http://jennerfox.com)) recorded *Hooray for Hetch Hetchy* at his home in the Oregon woods after we had to cancel his appearance at our annual dinner.



**Julene Freitas**, shown with her daughters, manages the Restore Hetch Hetchy office and our social media. When she's not dancing, swimming in the ocean or exploring the woods, you might find her volunteering with the Marine Mammal Center, on Kent Island with the Gulf of the Farallones Marine Sanctuary or at the Yggdrasil Urban Wildlife Rescue Center.



**Lesley Goren** is a talented southern California artist working on a special project for Restore Hetch Hetchy – you'll see it soon. Her stunning work is available at [lesleygoren.com](http://lesleygoren.com).



**Richard Sykes** is a retired water engineer, who is helping Restore Hetch Hetchy evaluate potential improvements to San Francisco's water system.



**Ron Rick**, retired from the Fine Arts Museums in San Francisco after a 36 year career, endows our newsletter and other graphics with a bold, professional look. Ron is also an ardent fly fisherman.



**Daniel McKenzie** is an old friend who has just developed our new website. After the picture was taken, he released the steelhead safely back into Oregon's Rogue River.

**Please support  
Restore Hetch Hetchy.**

*Together we can make  
Yosemite whole again.*

**Use the attached envelope or  
contribute online.**

Ways to give include contributing appreciated stock and including Restore Hetch Hetch in your estate planning—see [hetchhetchy.org](http://hetchhetchy.org)



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**The anonymous person** who clandestinely mailed key documents corroborating the federal government's violation of the Raker Act.

## Restore Hetch Hetchy

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Berkeley, CA 94703



### Obi Kaufmann's Hetch Hetchy Valley notecards

Obi Kaufmann's beautiful watercolor of a restored Hetch Hetchy Valley is now available on notecards. Obi is a naturalist and illustrator, and also author of the *California Field Atlas*, *The Forests of California* and the *State of Water: Understanding California's Most Precious Resource* – all available at Heyday Books.

Each box contains a set of 6 cards/envelopes and with Obi's poetry inside. Suggested contribution: \$10. To order, please call or email us at [admin@hetchhetchy.org](mailto:admin@hetchhetchy.org).

We are grateful to Obi for allowing us to reproduce his art and poetry.

## Reflections on 2020

At the beginning of the year, conventional wisdom cautioned that nothing could possibly displace the presidential election on the front page of our nation's newspapers and websites. By March, however, the coronavirus, or COVID-19, did exactly that — not only dominating the news cycle but also fundamentally changing how we live. Then, in late May, the horrible and graphic killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police took the news cycle and our very consciousness in another unexpected and troubling direction. Finally, those of us in California saw summer wildfires explode as never before.

May 2021 be a more positive year on all fronts. At Restore Hetch Hetchy, we are planning a better future for Yosemite National Park – one small but extraordinarily precious corner of planet Earth. We've been busy.

Presently, we are updating, with independent and well-respected experts, a blueprint for modernizing San Francisco's water system – so that the valley can be restored without losing a single drop of water supply. This new analysis will include opportunities for using California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (2014) as well as other recent developments in water management. This work, combined with *Valuing Hetch Hetchy Valley (2020)*, will be the cornerstone of the legislative advocacy we bring to officials in San Francisco, Sacramento and Washington, DC.

We are also engaging in a substantial new outreach program to educate young people about Hetch Hetchy's unfortunate past, to inspire them **to take action** and to broaden our political support.

And **as long as** the reservoir is in place, we will continue to advocate for expanded access to and recreation in the Hetch Hetchy area. Park visitors need to go to Hetch Hetchy to learn about the restoration opportunity at hand.

Once the dust from the election settles, we will again be engaging directly with government officials. We are devoutly nonpartisan, of course, but we are not naïve. We will work cooperatively with anyone and everyone who appreciates the legacy of Hetch Hetchy, the value of national parks, and the opportunity to make a better Yosemite.



**Spreck Rosekrans**  
Executive Director