



# Newsletter

Spring 2023

## Hetch Hetchy: Yosemite's Best Kept Secret

*Spreck Rosekrans*

People love Yosemite. They have explored Yosemite Valley, the Mariposa Grove, Tuolumne Meadows and other corners of the park. Hetch Hetchy, however, receives only about 1% of all park visitors. Hetch Hetchy is largely unknown, mysterious and a bit of a secret.

Sometimes it's good to keep a secret. We often prefer that our favorite trails and mountaintops not be overwhelmed by others. We would like to keep our favorite places to ourselves.

**To build support for restoration, however, we need people to go to Hetch Hetchy.**

The National Park Service has neglected the Hetch Hetchy area for over a century—to some degree at the behest of San Francisco. As we demonstrated in our Keeping Promises report (2021), access and recreation are limited far beyond what was intended by Congress when it passed the Raker Act in 1913.

Restore Hetch Hetchy is committed to improving access. We are working cooperatively with the superintendent and staff at Yosemite National Park. We are engaged with Congressional staff on proposed legislation (see back page). And we are pursuing legal means to enforce the letter and spirit of the Raker Act. Hetch Hetchy has been ignored for far too long.



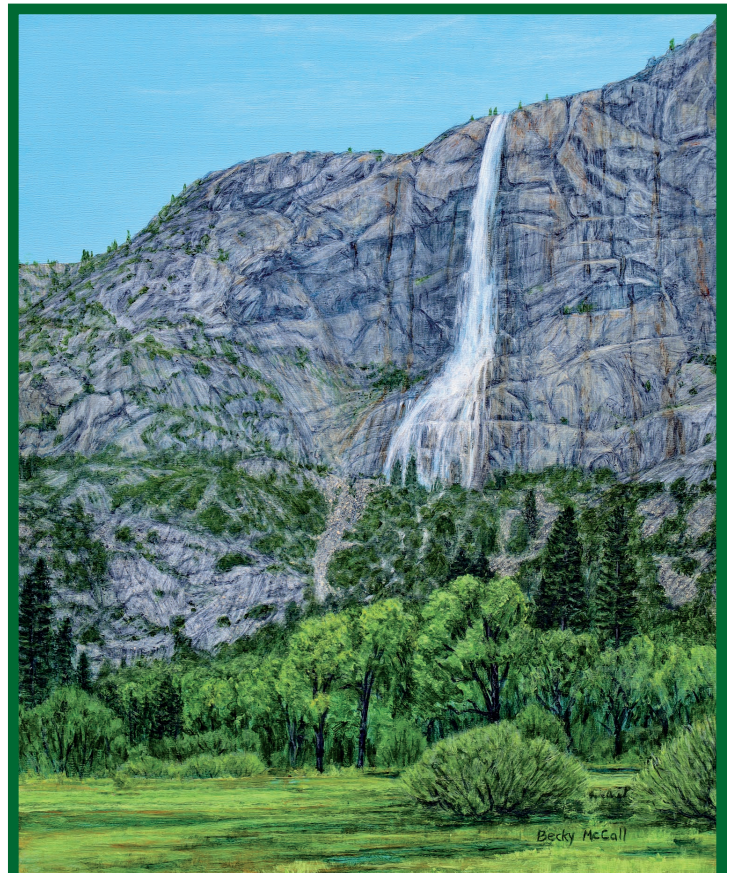
*San Francisco's "Chalet", sitting on a granite outcropping overlooking Hetch Hetchy, and other cabins are available for authorized guests of the city – a privilege not granted by the Raker Act. Most park visitors are not even allowed to camp at Hetch Hetchy.*

## Exciting Waterfall Season This Year

*Marissa Leonard*

After a winter of extreme precipitation, it's safe to say that the waterfalls in Hetch Hetchy will be incredible this spring. When the snow melts in the Sierra Nevada, the creeks will swell and water will tumble downhill. The falls will roar as high levels of runoff from a record-breaking winter spill over the edge of Hetch Hetchy's granite walls.

*(continued on page 2)*



*Tueeulala Falls Becky McCall*

## Groundwater Recharge – An Aquifer Half Full

*Spreck Rosekrans*

After three years of drought, 2023 has brought record amounts of rain and snow. It's a perfect time to recharge depleted aquifers throughout California, and especially in the Tuolumne watershed. Groundwater levels will indeed improve in 2023, but not enough is being done. It is essential to do better in future wet years.

Some of the rain now saturating the soil will simply seep in. It's important to understand, however, that most of our rivers no longer spread out into floodplains – rather, they are channeled between levees to evacuate the water from developed lands. As a result, natural recharge is limited.

*(continued on page 2)*



## Waterfalls in 2023 *(continued)*

Millions will flock to Yosemite Valley to stand at the base of Yosemite and Bridalveil Falls, or to hike to Vernal and Nevada Falls. The Mist Trail will drench huge crowds of hikers as they climb up the side of the most popular waterfalls in the park. Tueeulala and Wapama Falls, as they peak in Hetch Hetchy, will not see even close to the same level of visitors.

Despite their lack of visitation, the waterfalls in Hetch Hetchy will be every bit as awe-inspiring as the ones in Yosemite Valley. Wapama Falls will be so powerful as it flows into Hetch Hetchy that it will overtake the bridge that leads across its base. This bridge, which will be closed for visitor safety during peak times, is set to be improved by the National Park Service in 2024. Imagine standing right beneath Wapama Falls as it crashes down. Yosemite is known for close encounters with waterfalls, but many are missing out on one of the most intimate.

Restore Hetch Hetchy is working to bring more visitors to the area. We believe it is important that people visit Hetch Hetchy. We also know that we can bring people to Hetch Hetchy to learn its story without creating the overwhelming crowds that affect other areas of Yosemite National Park.

More visitation does not have to mean a detriment to the area. Following the principles of *Leave No Trace* is critical as we introduce more people to this part of the park. As increased visitation inevitably leads to more support for restoration, Restore Hetch Hetchy will continue to advocate for a "better Yosemite National Park." We are confident that a restored Hetch Hetchy Valley can be created, managed and enjoyed in a completely different way.

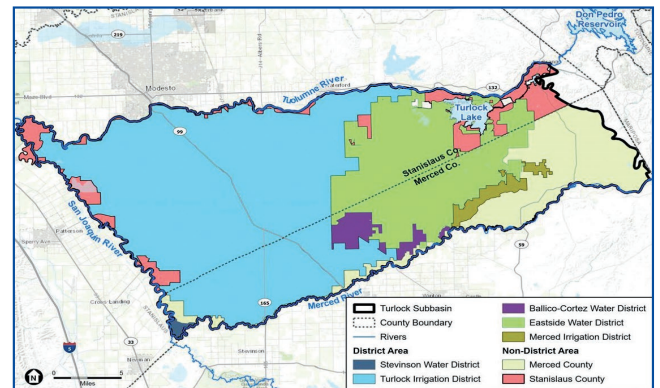


Wapama Falls Becky McCall

## Groundwater *(continued)*

"Levee setbacks" can and should recreate floodplains in some areas, but too often would require substantial and wholly impractical relocation of houses and even entire communities. To recharge groundwater when supplies are available, we need to adopt policies that encourage communities to develop and operate the necessary physical infrastructure while protecting environmental uses.

Permits to recharge groundwater, however, often require cumbersome and confusing regulation. In some cases, agencies worry they will lose their rights to future surface supplies. And, too often, cities and agricultural areas simply do not get along well enough to work cooperatively. **Solving these inexcusable inefficiencies will make campaigns like restoring Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park easier to accomplish.**



**Eastside Water District (in green), just east of Turlock (blue), is an ideal location for groundwater recharge to expand storage capacity for Tuolumne River supplies. An agreement between Eastside and Turlock could benefit both parties, as well as San Francisco and its customers.**

## Legacy Circle

We honor the lives of supporters of Restore Hetch Hetchy who joined our Legacy Circle this past year. We're grateful for their generosity, foresight, and enduring support.

If you are curious about including Restore Hetch Hetchy in your estate planning, please visit our website. We're available to answer any questions. Further instructions and our contact information can be found at the following link:  
<http://www.hetchhetchy.org/estate-planning>

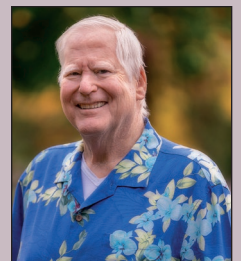


**Dorothy Jean Bobbitt**  
*Dorothy visited Hetch Hetchy often in the 1930's, shortly after the valley was flooded. Along with a few friends, she worked at Camp Mather in its early years and liked to tell stories of entertaining guests around the campfire. Dorothy was also a stalwart supporter of and longtime volunteer with the Marine Mammal Center at Fort Cronkite.*



**Marilyn Brown**  
*Marilyn Brown loved everything about Yosemite. She was a strong supporter of the Yosemite Conservancy and especially its campaign to restore the Mariposa Grove. Marilyn, with her husband Allan, was a longtime fixture at Restore Hetch Hetchy events and firmly believed Yosemite National Park is no place for a reservoir.*

**Rex Hime**  
1948-2023



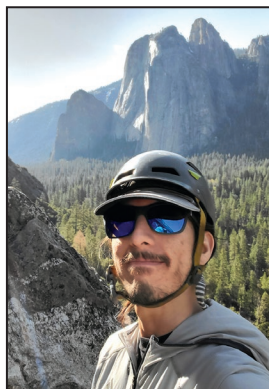
Restore Hetch Hetchy mourns the loss of longtime boardmember Rex Hime. We'll miss Rex's wisdom, wit and political acuity.



## New Faces at Restore Hetch Hetchy



**Marissa Leonard** joins us as **Engagement & Development Director**. Marissa will be managing fundraising, communications, and other projects to increase engagement with the campaign to restore Hetch Hetchy. Before coming to Restore Hetch Hetchy, Marissa was a freelance writer, and also worked seasonally in Yosemite, on the shores of Mono Lake, and in Colorado.



**Carlos Antunez** joins us as our new **Community Outreach Liaison**. Carlos is stationed in El Portal and will be handling outreach to local communities. His role is crucial in the process to find collaborative solutions for the restoration of Hetch Hetchy. Carlos comes to us with a background in outdoor education, having worked as an Interpretive Naturalist in Yosemite Valley and Santa Clara County.

### Notecards with Art by Lesley Goren

We are now offering a set of notecards designed by artist **Lesley Goren** based on the letterhead she created for us. The cards include Lesley's representation of Hetch Hetchy, wildflowers and the wildlife which will inhabit the restored valley. A set of five different designs is available for \$15. Email [admin@hetchhetchy.org](mailto:admin@hetchhetchy.org) if you'd like to place an order.



## Help us Create a New Kind of National Park

Support our efforts to restore Hetch Hetchy to its natural splendor. Your tax-deductible contribution allows us to continue seeking solutions to make Yosemite National Park whole again.

Fill out and mail the attached envelope, or visit [www.hetchhetchy.org/contribute](http://www.hetchhetchy.org/contribute) to donate online. We also accept appreciated securities and other forms of contributions.

**Restore Hetch Hetchy**  
**3286 Adeline St, Suite #7**  
**Berkeley, CA 94703**

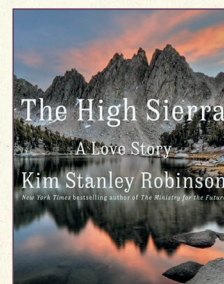
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## Save the Date *October 7, 2023*

**Restore Hetch Hetchy Annual Dinner**  
**Berkeley City Club**

**Special Guest: Author Kim Stanley Robinson**

Award-winning author Kim Stanley Robinson will be joining us as our keynote speaker at this year's annual dinner. Best known for compelling science fiction novels with ecological themes, Robinson's **High Sierra: A Love Story** includes a chapter about the future restoration of Hetch Hetchy.



***"It's inevitable... Someday, some politician in San Francisco is going to say, 'This is the right thing to do.' This is going to be one of the world's most amazing ecological restoration projects."***

- Peter Gleick, MacArthur Fellow, founder of the Pacific Institute (KPIX/CBS News – Feb 10, 2023)



## Restore Hetch Hetchy

3286 Adeline Street, Suite 7  
Berkeley, CA 94703



*Upper Hetch Hetchy Valley*  
Becky McCall

To see more of Becky McCall's paintings and to learn about Hetch Hetchy's history, see her book *In Old Hetch Hetchy: An Illustrated Tour and History of Yosemite's Other Grand Valley*.

### Legislative Update

#### *The Yosemite National Park Equal Access and Fairness Act,*

reintroduced by Congressman Tom McClintock, seeks to increase San Francisco's "rent" immediately, as well as improve recreational opportunities at Hetch Hetchy.

As more park visitors go to Hetch Hetchy and appreciate its grandeur, many will also learn about and support the opportunity to relocate the reservoir and restore the extraordinary valley.

California's drought is over, albeit ending in dramatic fashion with power outages and destructive flooding – and more yet to come when the snow melts. Still, it feels good when the state is saturated. The attention drawn to the importance of effective groundwater recharge programs bodes well for the future of water management alternatives, including restoring Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park.

We agree with Congressman McClintock that Hetch Hetchy should afford more opportunities for its visitors. Yosemite is in his district, and we are hopeful that this legislation will move forward. McClintock is very clear, however, that he does not support restoration. That's okay. Like many other elected officials, McClintock will need to be convinced Hetch Hetchy can be restored without losing a drop of water supply.

Many of the improvements sought by McClintock's legislation could also be achieved administratively. We are encouraging the National Park Service to do so. Furthermore, we plan to petition the Department of the Interior for long overdue visitor opportunities at Hetch Hetchy.

**Spreck Rosekrans**  
*Executive Director*

