



## Restore Hetch Hetchy Petitions for Improved Public Access – *alleges violations of federal law diminish visitor experience*

On September 25, Restore Hetch Hetchy petitioned Department of Interior and National Park Service officials to improve public access and recreational opportunities at Hetch Hetchy. The petition provides legal and historical rationale for significant change, including eliminating daily closure of the area, allowing camping and permitting non-polluting boats on Hetch Hetchy Reservoir.

The Petition also questions the legitimacy of San Francisco's use of cabins as well as its failure to provide potable water to the Hetch Hetchy Backpackers Campground.

Our engagement with the National Park Service has been positive. Superintendent Muldoon has recently extended visiting hours at Hetch Hetchy and explained that the NPS is working with San Francisco to assist with funding needs for "high priority" improvements to the campground, fixing the boat ramp and improving interpretative signage. **To date, however, no one in the federal government has addressed the assertions in our petition that these and other improvements at Hetch Hetchy are in fact required by law.**

***The Petition serves two principal purposes. Improved access will be welcomed by all visitors, including families, hikers, fishermen, climbers, birdwatchers et al. In addition, as visitors are better able to appreciate and explore the entire canyon, many will learn Hetch Hetchy's story and support the ultimate goal of restoring the valley to its natural splendor.***



Photo: Isabella Salaverry Rosekrans

*National Park Service Director Charles F. "Chuck" Sams III with Restore Hetch Hetchy Executive Director Spreck Rosekrans at the Yosemite Conservancy's centennial celebration in June. Spreck assured Chuck that the purpose of RHH's forthcoming legal petition was to make Yosemite a better national park.*

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## Kim Stanley Robinson keynotes Restore Hetch Hetchy dinner *Visionary author links restoration to his lifetime love of the Sierra*

At this year's Annual Dinner, held at the historic Berkeley City Club in October, supporters were joined by award-winning author Kim Stanley Robinson. Stan's speech, drawing from his own experiences in Hetch Hetchy, Yosemite and beyond, journeyed into the future where the valley is inevitably restored. He shared that restoring Hetch Hetchy is the right thing to do for wildlife, for the study of habitat restoration, and for the future of our national parks and the Sierra Nevada as a whole.

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(PETITION, continued)

***“The Park Service has imposed restrictions on use in the Hetch Hetchy watershed that are outside of its legal authority and in direct violation of the Raker Act. These restrictions prevent park visitors from exercising their rights at Hetch Hetchy and must be eliminated.”***

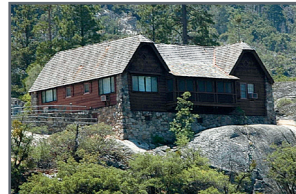
Michael Lozeau, counsel for Restore Hetch Hetchy

**In a nutshell, the Petition explains that the Raker Act's** provisions constraining visitor access are expressly limited and that the National Park Service, over the past century, has deferred to San Francisco in ways that go far beyond what the law allows. The petition asks that:

- Park visitors be allowed to camp at Hetch Hetchy—as *they do in other areas of Yosemite*;
- Park visitors be allowed 24-hour access to Hetch Hetchy—as *they are in other areas of Yosemite*;
- Non-polluting boats be allowed on Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, both for sightseeing and to provide access to locations made difficult to reach due to the reservoir—as *they are in other areas of Yosemite*;
- San Francisco provide potable water to the campsite at Hetch Hetchy, pursuant to the Raker Act;
- San Francisco's exclusive recreational use of cabins at Hetch Hetchy be disallowed;
- The National Park Service review San Francisco's compliance with the trail-building requirements of the Raker Act; and
- The National Park Service review its signage and communication practices at Hetch Hetchy.

 The San Francisco Standard

**San Francisco City Officials Enjoy Exclusive Vacation Spot in Yosemite. Why?**



*The San Francisco Standard excoriated city officials for their recreational use of cabins, including the “chalet” at Hetch Hetchy.*

Photo: Tim Conner



*Former San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein enjoys a boat ride on Hetch Hetchy Reservoir in 1987, shortly after Secretary of Interior Donald Hodel proposed the valley be restored.*

Photo: Chris Stewart

## Stakeholders agree on potential for groundwater recharge

Restore Hetch Hetchy has long promoted groundwater recharge during wet years, as one of several ways to ensure no supply is lost when Hetch Hetchy Reservoir is emptied and the valley restored. See, for example, **Yosemite's Opportunity:** *Options For Replacing Hetch Hetchy Reservoir* (2021).

It's common throughout California for water agencies to use groundwater “conjunctively”—i.e. in combination with surface reservoirs. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, for example, manages its “southeast” aquifer (just south of City limits) as part of its integrated system.

Available underground storage space is, however, much greater in the Central Valley, including the Tuolumne River watershed. In September, at San Francisco's request, Restore Hetch Hetchy made a presentation to stakeholders explaining the potential supply benefits from recharging excess Tuolumne River flows in wet years. **All agreed that there is abundant potential for improved supply, albeit priorities differ.** The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, its wholesale customers and business groups want to increase supply. Other environmental groups want to provide increased flows for downstream fisheries. Restore Hetch Hetchy wants a groundwater recharge program that can replace Hetch Hetchy Reservoir.

**Done right, there is potential to satisfy all three goals.**

The cost of groundwater recharge is relatively low. The impediment is a fundamental lack of trust and cooperation between agricultural and urban water agencies that too often frustrates efficient water management in California. These trust and cooperation issues, however, have been resolved elsewhere in our golden state—it's time they be resolved on the Tuolumne River as well.



Kim Stanley Robinson in conversation with RHH board members Mecia Serafino and chair Roger Williams.

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Robinson's speech gave his personal perspective on the positive impact that restoration would have for all who love Yosemite for many, many years to come. Extensive time spent adventuring in the Sierra helped him to tap into that future—he imagined backpackers marveling in awe at Hetch Hetchy from its valley floor as they trek into (or out of) the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne. Someday, he mused, there will come a time that future generations will forget that Hetch Hetchy was ever drowned by a reservoir.

Restore Hetch Hetchy is grateful to Stan for sharing his thoughtful words and his time with us, and to everyone whose support helped us make this year's dinner a success.

***“While sharing his vision, Robinson described how phenomenal the transition was: how quickly topsoils were naturally restored to the valley walls, how many indigenous species (both fauna and flora) returned to the valley floor within the first two decades. In fact, the transition was so phenomenal that younger generations became more engaged and more involved in California’s natural environment.”***

Todd Kerr, Berkeley Times, October 19th 2023

## California Climber Magazine Highlights Hetch Hetchy

The Fall 2023 Edition of California Climber magazine is devoted to climbing routes and stories in Hetch Hetchy. The issue features spectacular photography of numerous well-known climbers, including board member Lucho Rivera who knows the canyon as well as anybody. Let us know if you would like us to send you a hard copy.



## Please Contribute.

Return Hetch Hetchy Valley to its natural splendor.



The vision of Restore Hetch Hetchy is to return to the people Yosemite Valley's lost twin, Hetch Hetchy—a majestic glacier-carved valley with towering cliffs and waterfalls, an untamed place where river and wildlife run free, a new kind of national park.

Use attached envelope or contribute online.

## RESTORE HETCH HETCHY

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We're grateful to long-time supporters who have left a lasting impact on our mission by including Restore Hetch Hetchy in their estate planning. We're happy to answer any questions and discuss if joining our Legacy Circle might be right for you.

## Restore Hetch Hetchy

3286 Adeline Street, Suite 7  
Berkeley, CA 94703



*Expanded gate hours, camping and boating will make Hetch Hetchy more accessible for rock climbers like Lucho Rivera as well as all visitors to Yosemite National Park.*      Photos: San Crossley (Lucho) and @She\_Explores

## Balancing protection and visitor access

Our vision for Hetch Hetchy is one of careful balance, prioritizing both protection and visitor access. Some are concerned that we are advocating to turn the valley into a traffic-choked tourist attraction. Others believe our vision is too exclusive, creating wilderness only for a very few. The reality is in the middle, far from these two extremes.

We want to accommodate park visitors without the congestion that too often besets Yosemite Valley. The ultimate decision to restore Hetch Hetchy, whether made through Congressional legislation or agreement with San Francisco, will include a visitor management plan. Restoration will provide us the opportunity to get it right.

Important questions have already arisen as we encourage more people to visit Hetch Hetchy even with the dam in place. No one has objected to extended visitor hours or increased camping opportunities. More controversial are our proposals to build a trail to the top of Tueeulala Falls and to allow boating on the reservoir.

**While it's true that hardy hikers can reach the top of the falls with relative ease, establishing a trail would greatly enhance accessibility for the majority of park visitors.** Similarly, taking a boat across the reservoir would unlock a world of possibilities to explore the natural wonders surrounding Hetch Hetchy Valley.

We are all tourists, and we all deserve to fully appreciate the natural magnificence that is Hetch Hetchy.

Spreck Rosekrans

P.S. As always, I am available to discuss our vision or other matters by email, phone or (best) in person.

Drop me a note if you'd like to engage – [spreck@hetchhetchy.org](mailto:spreck@hetchhetchy.org).