



RESTORE HETCH HETCHY

Yosemite National Park

September 17, 2026

The Honorable Harriet Hageman, Chair of the Subcommittee on Water,
Wildlife and Fisheries
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Subject: **H.R. 177, the Yosemite National Park Equal Access and
Fairness Act**

Dear Chair Hageman:

On behalf of Restore Hetch Hetchy, I want to express my appreciation to you for addressing H.R.177, the Yosemite National Park Equal Access and Fairness Act, at yesterday's hearing. I urge you to move this bill forward to bring about long-overdue improvements to the visitor experience in Yosemite National Park.

For too long, recreation opportunities in the Hetch Hetchy area have been neglected, despite increasing visitor demand. Improvements to the visitor experience are supported by the public, by the Congressional Record and by law. Substantial supporting documentation is listed below and posted online.¹

Many improvements can and should be administratively implemented by the National Park Service and/or Department of Interior (Indeed, we are grateful that the National Park Service, as of spring 2026, is allowing fishing in Hetch Hetchy Reservoir.) Legislation, however, is warranted and has the potential to guarantee the public access and recreation opportunities at Hetch Hetchy that Congress fully expected when it passed the Raker Act in 1913 allowing San Francisco to build a dam in the valley.

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Legislation could also require that San Francisco pay a fair price for the use of the valley and make funds available for improved recreational access, enhanced fire mitigation practices and other purposes.

We ask that you consider the following key areas as you further develop legislation:

1. Provide Boating Access

- Boating is currently prohibited at Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, despite Congressional intent under the Raker Act of 1913 to allow it. San Francisco's own materials promoted boating when it was advocating for the Raker Act's passage.
- Of the 38 reservoirs in California holding over 200,000 acre-feet of water, only Hetch Hetchy prohibits boating (See Recreation Summary for Large Reservoirs in California).
- Proposed Solution: Legislation should mandate that the National Park Service allow boating. Boating could take many forms, including concessionaire-operated quiet, non-polluting electric tour boats and/or rentals of kayaks and canoes.

2. Swimming

- Swimming is typically permitted at large reservoirs in California. The Hetch Hetchy area is very hot in summer, and park visitors would love the opportunity to cool off.
- All other large water agencies in California pay the cost of filtering water supplies. San Francisco chooses to avoid paying the cost to filter its water.
- Proposed Solution: Swimming should be allowed at Hetch Hetchy Reservoir as it is in other major reservoirs in California.

3. Improve Camping Opportunities

- Currently, camping at Hetch Hetchy is restricted to backpackers, even though a designated campground exists.
- The campground lacks potable water, despite Section 9(p) of the Raker Act requiring San Francisco to provide it. (We've been told efforts to comply with this provision are being pursued, but no construction has begun.)



The water at the Hetch Hetchy campground is non-potable, despite the Raker Act's requirement that "the grantee shall ... provide a good and sufficient supply of water for camp purposes."



- Meanwhile, San Francisco maintains private recreational cabins for select guests, with questionable legal authorization.
- Proposed Solution: Legislation should require campground improvements, ensure potable water access, and repurpose city-privileged facilities for public use.

4. Remove Unjustified Access Restrictions

- Unlike all other entrances to Yosemite, Hetch Hetchy is only open during daylight hours, preventing visitors from enjoying sunrise and sunset in one of Yosemite's most spectacular landscapes.
- Proposed Solution: Legislation should mandate 24-hour public access, aligning Hetch Hetchy with Yosemite's other park entrances.

5. Expand Hiking Trails

- Hetch Hetchy has fewer hiking trails compared to other areas of Yosemite. While the existing north-side trail is popular, additional trails would allow visitors to more fully explore and appreciate the spectacular canyon.
- Proposed Solution: Legislation could prioritize new trails, such as:
 - A short, scenic trail from the Hetch Hetchy–Lake Eleanor saddle to the canyon rim, offering breathtaking views.
 - A trail extension connecting Hetch Hetchy to the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne, creating a world-class backpacking route.

6. Funding & San Francisco's Financial Obligations

- Currently, San Francisco pays only \$30,000 per year in “rent” for exclusive rights to the reservoir—a figure set when the Raker Act was passed in 1913. (The City also reimburses Yosemite National Park for costs related to security and watershed protection.)
- Proposed Solution: Legislation presents an opportunity to ensure San Francisco pays a fair price for its use of the valley. Increasing this payment could help fund necessary improvements, such as trail expansions, visitor services, and fire mitigation efforts.

Legislation has the potential to transform Hetch Hetchy into the world-class recreational destination that its natural landscape warrants. Including specific provisions to enhance access and recreation in legislation would guarantee meaningful and lasting improvements.

Restore Hetch Hetchy stands ready to collaborate with you and other members of Congress to advance legislation on this important issue.

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Thank you for your leadership on this issue. Please contact me if I can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Spreck Rosekrans
Executive Director
spreck@hetchhetchy.org

CC: Rep. Tom McClintock
Rep. Ken Calvert
Rep. Doug LaMalfa
Rep. David Valadao

¹ The following documents are available at <https://hetchhetchy.org/access>. Please do not hesitate to contact Restore Hetch Hetchy (spreck@hetchhetchy.org) for more information.

1. [Support letter for legislation to improve access at Hetch Hetchy](#) (2023), signed by 5 conservation and recreation groups
2. [Public comment letter on Yosemite Visitor Access Management Plan](#) (2023), signed by 781 citizens
3. [Keeping Promises: Providing Public Access to Hetch Hetchy Valley, Yosemite National Park](#) (Restore Hetch Hetchy, 2021)
4. [Petition to Improve Public Access to the Hetch Hetchy Area of Yosemite National Park](#) (Restore Hetch Hetchy, 2023)
5. [Recreation Summary for Large Reservoirs in California](#) (Restore Hetch Hetchy, 2024)
6. [Bay Area Water Taste Test Summary](#) (Restore Hetch Hetchy, 2024)