



**RESTORE HETCH HETCHY**  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

October 17, 2011

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Ms. Francesca Vietor  
President  
San Francisco Public Utilities Commission  
1155 Market St  
San Francisco, CA 94103-1559

Dear President Vietor:

I'm writing to request that the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) hold a public hearing on the possibility of restoring Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park. As you acknowledged in our previous conversations, the Commission has a responsibility to foster public debate about important public policy issues. The state of California, the Federal Government, the California legislature and multiple members of the environmental community have all participated in this debate over the last 20 years while the SFPUC has remained stubbornly silent. You have the opportunity to change that.

Please consider the following:

- ✓ Policy makers have a responsibility to continually evaluate ways in which adverse impacts on the environment can be reduced. This is especially true for the SFPUC given San Francisco's largest watershed exists within Yosemite National Park. Indeed, part of the SFPUC missions is:

"The purpose of the Water Enterprise Environmental Stewardship Policy is to establish long-term management direction for our owned lands and natural resources affected by operation of the water system within the Tuolumne River, Alameda Creek, and Peninsula watersheds. Environmental stewardship is a fundamental component of our mission, and a responsibility of all Water Enterprise employees. "

- ✓ The Commission is charged with setting policy that the staff is responsible for implementing. The Commission has never taken a formal position on restoring Hetch Hetchy Valley, which has forced the staff to rely on their personal opinions about the issue when responding to media inquiries. Given that the only

way in which Hetch Hetchy can be restored is through a direct vote of the electorate, any public expression of personal opinions by staff is inappropriate.

- ✓ Restore Hetch Hetchy has announced plans to place an initiative before the voters in 2012 that would lead to the removal of the Hetch Hetchy reservoir. It is important that the Commission play a role in fostering dialogue about the costs and benefits of ending San Francisco's use of the valley as a water storage facility.
- ✓ The Congressional Research Service, the research arm of the United States Congress, recently released a report questioning previous cost estimates prepared by the State of California in coordination with the staff of the SFPUC. Given the broad discrepancies on projected costs it would be helpful to learn more about these projections.
- ✓ The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) recently ruled that the possibility of increasing the dam at Don Pedro as an alternative to storing water in Hetch Hetchy reservoir should be evaluated. The SFPUC should gather information relevant to that decision.

Sound public policy only occurs when policy makers earnestly and robustly debate the costs and benefits of a policy proposal. To date, the SFPUC has remained inappropriately mute on this national environmental problem. By organizing a public hearing and inviting a broad spectrum of experts to participate, you and your fellow commissioners will be more effective in meeting your leadership responsibilities.

The return of the Hetch Hetchy Valley to the American people should only occur once the concerns and needs of San Francisco have been met. This will best occur if San Francisco policy makers participate in the discussion—if a decision is forced on the City by the courts or by the voters it may result in unnecessary harm to the interests of San Francisco. I urge you and your fellow commissioners to prevent this from happening and to become a part of discussion.

Sincerely,



Mike Marshall  
Executive Director

cc.: Commissioner Courtney  
Commissioner Moller Caen  
Commissioner Moran  
Commissioner Torres  
Mayor Ed Lee  
Members of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors