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Hetch Hetchy restoration discussed

By Matt Weiser -- Bee Staff Writer

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A workshop in Sacramento Thursday on prospects for restoring the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park ignited passions on both sides of the debate.

The valley was dammed in 1923 as a water supply for San Francisco. A series of Pulitzer Prize-winning editorials in The Sacramento Bee helped spur the governor's action to study the matter.

The workshop at the Joe Serna Jr. Cal/EPA Building is part of a study launched last fall by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to assess the feasibility of restoring Hetch Hetchy. The goal is not to take a position, but to gather information.

The idea of restoration is controversial because it involves shifting San Francisco to a different water source and spending perhaps \$1 billion or more to dismantle the dam and restore a valley that John Muir once called "Yosemite's twin." The study ordered by Schwarzenegger is expected to be complete in the fall.

"In my view, all parties need to be kept whole," said Assemblywoman Lois Wolk, D-Davis. "There can be no losers in this effort. But there can be many winners."

San Francisco leaders are opposed to restoring the valley, but support the study as a means to inform the public.

"I think it will provide information that will underscore how expensive this could be, and how it will affect life in the Bay Area," said Laura Spanjian, a spokeswoman for the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission.

Others think the valley can be restored with little pain to Bay Area residents, and great benefits for nature lovers.

"This hunk of concrete does not belong in a national park," said Ron Good, executive director of Restore Hetch Hetchy. "We think the state will come around to our point of view by the time the study is through."

For more information, see Friday's Bee

About the writer:

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Related audio:

The Following audio was recorded Thursday during and after a press briefing on proposals for Hetch Hetchy reservoir:

- 🔊 [Gary Bardini, Hetch Hetchy project manager for the state Department of Water Resources, provides background on the state's involvement in Hetch Hetchy issues \(3:56\)](#)
- 🔊 [Bardini responds to questions from The Bee's Matt Weiser about what Hetch Hetchy options the state has studied so far \(1:59\)](#)
- 🔊 [Laura Spanjian, spokeswoman for San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, says San Francisco welcomes a closer look at Hetch Hetchy and its future \(:51\)](#)
- 🔊 [Spanjian talks about why San Francisco opposes removal of O'Shaughnessy Dam at Hetch Hetchy \(:47\)](#)
- 🔊 [John Grubb, spokesman for Bay Area Council, says his group opposes studying the removal of O'Shaughnessy Dam \(1:11\)](#)
- 🔊 [Jerry Meral, a member of Restore Hetch Hetchy's board and co-chairman of CalFed's water supply committee, responds to arguments made by John Grubb of the Bay Area Council \(2:12\)](#)
- 🔊 [Spanjian of San Francisco Public Utilities Commission responds to arguments from those who favor taking down O'Shaughnessy Dam \(2:58\)](#)

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