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## State to examine Hetch Hetchy restoration

**By Herbert A. Sample -- Bee San Francisco Bureau**  
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OAKLAND - The Schwarzenegger administration has decided to assess studies of restoring the submerged Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park, an idea that has been fiercely criticized by San Francisco business and government interests.

The governor's intentions came to light Thursday in a letter sent on his behalf by Resources Agency Secretary Mike Chrisman to two Assembly Democrats who have pushed for a state examination of re-establishing the valley.

Chrisman wrote that the Department of Parks and Recreation would "review the growing body" of studies on Hetch Hetchy, including analyses by Environmental Defense, a conservation group, and the University of California, Davis.

The department also will work with the National Park Service to estimate the parkland value of a restored valley.

Further, the state Department of Water Resources will "consider" the impact on water supply for 2.4 million residents on the San Francisco Peninsula, parts of Santa Clara County and the East Bay who get their water from Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, which sits behind the 80-year-old O'Shaughnessy Dam.

"As the various interests discuss the prospect of restoring Hetch Hetchy, we must balance our dreams and aspirations, our limited financial resources, and our need for water and power reliability," Chrisman wrote in the Nov. 8 letter.

Lester Snow, Water Resources director, stressed in an interview that the state will not conduct an exhaustive analysis of restoring Hetch Hetchy, much less take a position on removing the dam.

Rather, he said the two agencies will collect data from studies dating back at least to the 1980s, gather comment and write an assessment within a year.

"Hopefully, we can provide an objective forum where both sides or the many parties that have views on this can provide information and get it treated fairly in our assessment," Snow said.

Restoration advocates hailed the letter as a leap forward for the politically sensitive concept.

"No one has wanted to study the issue. It's been a hot potato," Assemblywoman Lois Wolk,

D-Davis, said in an interview. "But this administration is willing to take a look at it."

Assemblyman Joe Canciamilla, D-Pittsburg, said in a statement that he was "very pleased this administration is ready to give this proposal the serious consideration it is due."

Assemblyman Tim Leslie, R-Tahoe City, said the state's first priority must remain water and electricity supplies. "But a prospect as compelling as a restored Hetch Hetchy Valley merits a deep and thorough investigation of all the facts," he added in a statement.

Tom Graff, Environmental Defense's regional director, called the letter "a significant step forward."

In September, the group unveiled a study contending that the water and power provided by the reservoir and dam are replaceable for \$500 million to \$1.65 billion.

Critics of dismantling the dam have vowed to fight restoration, saying it would wreak havoc on Bay Area water and power supplies. San Francisco city government and the Turlock and Modesto irrigation districts use electricity generated at O'Shaughnessy Dam.

U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., who has long opposed Hetch Hetchy restoration, said in a statement: "I have no problem with a study and will be happy to look at the results. But I can't see a scenario where I would support tearing down" the dam.

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