

and for the replacement of water and power supplies lost by draining the reservoir. It will take time to conduct more detailed studies on these alternatives, but the bottom line is that the proposal to return the "Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne" in Yosemite to its natural state is both possible and feasible.

A Requiem for Hetch Hetchy:

"Where so many might have come to know the days and nights and the seasons through the ages. Other sources of power and water were at hand and still are. A few men knew it then; all know it now. But the primeval forest and meadow and stream, serene or jubilant, will not be known again. This is yesterday's valley." Holway Jones, John Muir and the Sierra Club: The Battle for Yosemite (1965)

Maybe the time has come to once again make Hetch Hetchy today's valley rather than yesterday's.

## Hodel's motivation for his Hetch Hetchy proposal

By Kerry Zachariasen  
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Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodel threw a tastily baited hook to environmentalists on August 6, 1987, when he formally announced his idea to dismantle O'Shaughnessy Dam and release the waters of Hetch Hetchy reservoir.

At first, conservationists received the notion with a mixture of delight and skepticism. It seemed unfeasible and expensive; it might mean giving in on the Auburn Dam; it was a serious threat to San Francisco's water and power supply. On the other hand, the possibility of freeing the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne was exciting.

Little by little, as more studies come out and the real possibilities sink in, the initial

skepticism seems to have worn off. There is a strong consensus among environmental groups that the plan might actually work. However, there may still be room for skepticism, at least in questioning and evaluating Hodel's motives for this substantially out-of-character suggestion.

Fryar Calhoun wrote in the Friends of the River's newsletter, "Maybe we should distrust his motives, but it doesn't matter." Headwaters, Oct.-Nov. 1987, p.1. It is not so clear that it doesn't matter. There are any number of considerations that could be contributing to Hodel's enthusiasm.

Among these are the issues of expanding Yosemite's recreational resources and Hodel's interest in oil exploration and development in Alaska. There is also speculation regarding his tendency toward

favoring public projects over private businesses. And finally, of course, there is the possibility that Hodel honestly does believe in the inherent value of restoring Hetch Hetchy.

The notion of expanding Yosemite is one of the first to consider. San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein's initial objections to the plan included the question of whether an existing water and power supply should be traded for more campgrounds. San Francisco's obvious economic bias aside, it is a relevant question whether Hetch Hetchy Valley would become an outlet for the overcrowding and pollution of Yosemite Valley.

Tom Wilson, one of Hodel's aides suggested that "if you had the water out of Hetch Hetchy ... you would have a second Yosemite Valley." (Sacramento Bee, August 6, 1987 p.1) As it now stands, Hetch Hetchy Valley is fairly inaccessible to substantial traffic and is kept at a

minimum of recreational development. Except for the existence of the reservoir, the area is quite isolated and pristine.

Surely environmentalists are not looking to create another heavily used and commercialized, money-making venture like Yosemite Valley. Hodel has said he doesn't want Hetch Hetchy, if drained, to be developed to the same level as Yosemite and he favors keeping it "natural." Interested parties are well-advised to keep a close eye on the actual plans, and to make sure any trade-offs are in the valley's own best interests.

Hodel initially indicated he might seek the restoration of Hetch Hetchy as a quid pro quo for building the Auburn Dam as a resupply source. The Auburn project has since been discarded, but there are other projects that could be used instead. It is interesting, and perhaps notable, that the day after Hodel made this announce-

ment, he left for Alaska to continue negotiations on land sales in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge coastline.

In February 1987, H.R. 1082 the "Arctic Coastal Plain Leasing Act" was introduced as a plan to trade federally owned subsurface mineral rights to Alaskan corporations and oil companies. The development of the plan has been one of Hodel's major projects throughout the year, and he has tried to handle it in his usual low-key style avoiding public debate (unlike his introduction of the Hetch Hetchy idea). Environmental groups have filed suit in federal district court to stop negotiations between the department and native corporations and oil companies. In essence, this issue has become a significant controversy and is Hodel's primary current fight.

No one has actually said anything directly linking the two proposals, but the connection is not entirely far-fetched.

If Hodel can garner enough support from environmentalist groups over something as emotional as Hetch Hetchy, he may at the least distract conservationist attention from his Alaskan ventures. At the most, he may feel he has ground to expect some slackening in the opposition to this particular project on the Wildlife Refuge coastline.

The national groups which oppose the Alaskan project are also those which tend to support the Hetch Hetchy idea, including the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society and Worldwatch. These groups not only have local state interests, but are powerful environmental lobbying voices in Washington, D.C. It is in Hodel's interests to gain what he can from the environmentalists.

There are other ideas creating speculation. It has been suggested that Hodel has a general bias against privately owned utilities like Pacific Gas & Electric Company, stemming from his years with the Bonneville

Power Administration in the Pacific Northwest, and BPA's competition with PG&E. If indeed that is the case, then dismantling O'Shaughnessy effectively takes away one of PG&E's bigger sources of cheap power. Hodel could eliminate the partnership between San Francisco and PG&E, and strike a blow at the corporation itself.

Finally, it is only fair to allow for the possibility that Hodel honestly wants to restore Hetch Hetchy simply for its own sake - because it is an incredible national treasure and natural wonder, and because the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne deserves to be restored to its original splendor. After all, that is the kind of reasoning and argument that John Muir brought to the early fights.

As for Hodel himself, there are rumors and stories about his activities prior to and after the announcement. One story runs that he took a river trip through Cataract Canyon on the Colorado

River in Utah. According to the story, he convinced the guides of his true appreciation for the river, the canyons and the experience overall on a very personal level.

Another rumor says that shortly after his announcement, while he was in Yosemite looking over the dam and the valley, he also took one of the rock climbing classes in Tuolumne Meadows. Again, he was very appreciative, admiring and supportive of the park, the work the rangers do and of the wilderness itself.

Yet another story has Hodel in Colorado a few weeks before the Hetch Hetchy announcement to observe the results of an "undamming" where a facility was torn down and the former reservoir site is to be rehabilitated. After visiting the site, Hodel is said to have given serious consideration to the idea of restoring Hetch Hetchy.

It is possible that Hodel wants only the best and for the best of reasons, and it is important to

include that possibility in an evaluation of his motives. However, given his track record to date, it is also important still to be wary of his actions and to question his words.

Whatever his motivates, there is no doubt but that he has skillfully handled public opinion on a delicate subject. By introducing the idea in simplistic, non-confrontational terms, and letting it sift and filter into the public mind, he has managed to split San Francisco and the environmental community and get the environmentalists behind him. (He has even been given a gold colored monkey wrench by environmentalist David Brower.) It costs him nothing to lose San Francisco politically and he can take an effective stab at PG&E, if that is something he desires.

He has made a tantalizing suggestion, one which looks more feasible every day. It is critical that nothing be inadvertently given away or compromised with

respect to other projects in the enthusiasm for this one.

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## Hodel's Hetch Hetchy proposal draws criticism and applause

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Since Interior Secretary Donald P. Hodel announced plans to study restoration of Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park, battle lines have been drawn between those who favor the proposal and those who oppose it.

But, the proposal has created some unexpected alliances.

Hodel announced his plan in July 1987, joining a battle begun 70 years ago by conservationist John Muir. Although environmental groups have been generally receptive, they remain skeptical

about Hodel's motives.

On the other side, the liberal Democrats of San Francisco have gathered behind the opposition leadership of Mayor Dianne Feinstein, along with Republican Sen. Pete Wilson and Pacific Gas and Electric — strange bedfellows indeed.

Hodel told U.S. News and World Report that "with few exceptions, the major scenic areas are now protected. What's being considered now are ways to better use existing parkland. Consider the Hetch Hetchy dam in California. The decision to flood that valley would be unthinkable today. Behind my idea to drain the reservoir is the