Hetch Hetchy context and sources

Read the case carefully

San Francisco sought water from the Hetch Hetchy area in Yosemite National Park. An earlier permit existed before Congress considered the 1913 bill. People and organizations disagreed about water needs, irrigation, scenery and public use. The National Archives overview supplies this historical context; the documents below let you study particular requests and decisions.

Institutions in these documents

- Congress is the federal legislature, made up of the Senate and House of Representatives. A senator receives a letter as a member of the Senate. One senator receiving a request does not alone enact a law.
- The President and Secretary of the Interior are executive officials. Some writers ask them to act on the earlier permit. Identify what the writer asks; do not assume that every requested action was legally available or carried out.
- The enacted Act assigns specific map approval to the Secretary of the Interior. Use that stated role rather than guessing general powers from a job title.

Four distinctions

- A petition or public resolution records what its writers request or endorse.
- A proposed bill contains language offered for legislation. Formal wording such as “Be it enacted” can appear in a proposal.
- An enacted Act is a law. In this packet, the official Act is dated December 19, 1913.
- Authorization permits specified actions under stated conditions. It does not prove that construction happened immediately or that promised benefits occurred.

How to read these pages

The source cards are Mentor Teaching paraphrases, not full transcriptions. Quotation marks identify brief exact excerpts. Use the original scans to see wording, dates and signatures. The sources folder holds full images and the government PDF; external links in Source credits are optional. Attribute a prediction or claimed benefit to its writer. The selected voices cannot establish what everyone believed.

Vocabulary: revoke = withdraw permission; rights of way = rights to use a route through land for specified purposes; grantee = the recipient of a grant; irrigation = supplying water to land; resolution = an adopted statement whose effect depends on who adopts it.

Hetch Hetchy context and sources

Sources for later revisit

Maine Central Labor Union

Original: one-page resolution with no printed date. National Archives item 7268079 identifies 1913; no month or day is supplied. The typed name reads Augusta, Hallowell, & Gardner Central Labor Union.

Paraphrase: The union endorses San Francisco’s petition to Congress for rights in the Hetch Hetchy region. It claims a reservoir would meet human water needs without impairing the scenery. Its final resolution petitions the U.S. Senate to grant the rights embodied in the Raker bill, which the writer says had already passed the House of Representatives. This endorsement and request are not themselves enactment.

Exact excerpt: “we petition the Senate of the United States”. The resolution’s account of House passage is a source statement; the selected image supplies no exact House-vote date.

Hetch Hetchy context and sources

Sources for later revisit

Act approved December 19, 1913

Original: U.S. Statutes at Large, volume 38, chapter 4, pages 242–251, Public No. 41, H.R. 7207. The government PDF begins at page 242 and continues into other Acts after this Act ends. Use only the labeled sections for this inquiry.

Paraphrase of section 1, page 242: Congress grants San Francisco specified rights of way for water works and other stated purposes, together with lands for reservoirs and dams as determined necessary by the Secretary of the Interior. These are legal grants with stated terms, not evidence that the works were built that day.

Paraphrase of section 2, page 243: Within three years of passage, the grantee must file maps showing the boundaries, locations and extent of the proposed rights of way and lands. No permanent construction may begin on that land until the maps have been filed and approved by the Secretary of the Interior.

Exact excerpt from section 2: “no permanent construction work shall be commenced”. The sentence continues with the map-filing and approval condition. The Act ends with approval on December 19, 1913, on page 251.

A bill and an Act may both say “Be it enacted”. Use document heading, dates and the official approved Act, not that phrase alone, to decide document status.

Hetch Hetchy context and sources

Sources for later revisit

Whose views can we hear

The supplied National Park Service context explains that Indigenous peoples lived in Hetch Hetchy for thousands of years and used its resources. None of these six selected requests gives an Indigenous-authored position on the 1913 bill. Their absence leaves a limit in this packet, not evidence of agreement or absence from the valley. See Source credits for the context source.