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.

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Sources for starting task

Hypatia Women’s Club

Original: two-page letter, San Francisco, February 5, 1910, addressed to Hon. Frank P. Flint, U.S. Senator. Signed by Edith Webster, secretary of the club. National Archives, Records of the U.S. Senate, item 7268040.

Paraphrase of page 1: The club voted to ask that the government’s existing permission for San Francisco to take water from Lake Eleanor and Hetch Hetchy not be revoked. It claims the city has no other available sufficient pure-water supply. Page 2 supplies more arguments and the signature.

Exact excerpt, page 1: “be not revoked”. This asks to keep permission. The letter does not record that Flint acted or that a new law passed.