
Desolation of the Hetch Hetchy Valley

Between 1908 and 1913 the city of San Francisco proposed building a dam in the Hetch Hetchy Valley. The city was growing and needed this water supply to provide fresh water and a power source. If the dam was built, it would destroy the Valley. The preservationists did not approve of the construction and said that it was illegal because the Valley is within Yosemite National Park. In the end the city of San Francisco built the O'Shaughnessy Dam, destroying the Hetch Hetchy valley.

Although they lost the valley, the damming of Hetch Hetchy raised public awareness about the importance of preserving nature and helped justify the creation of the National Park Service. Even now there are preservationists that want the valley restored.

During 1908 the rapidly growing city of San Francisco needed a fast and easy source of water and were not concerned about the environmental impact it might have. The city proposed building a dam in the Hetch Hetchy valley to create a reservoir, unfortunately for them Hetch Hetchy was located within Yosemite National Park and protected by the federal government.

For the city to be able to build a dam they needed approval from the federal government in the form of a bill. The city pressured congressman John Raker to draft and present a bill to congress. These complaints prompted John Raker to draft the (D-CA), H.R. 7207 bill. This bill was later dubbed "the Raker bill."

When John Raker proposed the bill to Congress, it sparked a heated debate that swept throughout the country and divided the population of the U.S, into The conservationists who were in favor of dam construction and believed that the environment should be used in a conscientious manner to benefit society. And the preservationists who argued that the valley should be preserved for all people. This debate caused organizations and clubs to write letters and petitions either in support or in opposition to the dam. However, Congress passed the Raker Act which enabled the creation of the dam. President Woodrow Wilson signed the bill into law on December 19th, 1913.

Although the preservationists lost this battle, the damming of Hetch Hetchy raised public awareness about the importance of preserving nature, and helped justify the creation of the National Park Service. On August 25th, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed the organic act creating the National Park Service. Even after years of being underwater the history of the Hetch Hetchy valley and the efforts of its preservers have not been forgotten. There are still marches in the name of John Muir for his actions to preserve nature, organizations to remove

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the dam and restore the valley are active to this day.

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