



**U.S. Department of the  
Interior  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**  
Yosemite National Park  
P. O. Box 577  
Yosemite, CA 95389

**U.S. Department of  
Agriculture  
U.S. FOREST SERVICE**  
Stanislaus National Forest  
Groveland Ranger District  
24545 Highway 120  
Groveland, CA 95321



October 2, 2007

**SEP 27 2007**

### **Hetch Hetchy Communication System Upgrade Project**

Dear Interested Public:

We are pleased to present the Environmental Assessment/Preliminary Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study (EA/PMND and IS) for the *Hetch Hetchy Communication System Upgrade Project* for your review. Hetch Hetchy Water & Power (HHW&P), a subsidiary of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), in cooperation with the U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS), is proposing a communications system upgrade and replacement project.

The communications system is used for the operation of HHW&P's water supply and electric utility system, which includes facilities in the upper Tuolumne River watershed of Yosemite National Park and the Stanislaus National Forest in the Sierra Nevada. The purpose of the proposed project is to: 1) vacate the 2 Gigahertz (GHz) band currently being used, per Federal Communications Commission requirements; 2) replace and upgrade the aging communications system with an improved system; 3) provide the video and radio bandwidth to allow for future installation of voice radio systems, which could expand system coverage to the O'Shaughnessy, Cherry Lake, and Lake Eleanor areas; and 4) provide the foundation infrastructure for housing NPS and USFS communications equipment associated with their individual communications systems. Twenty-nine of the 32 proposed sites are located at existing facilities, while three are proposed new sites: Cherry Tower Site, Burnout Ridge, and Poopenaut Pass. Cherry Tower Site is located on land within Stanislaus National Forest and managed by HHW&P under the terms of the Raker Act. Burnout Ridge is located on National Forest System lands managed by Stanislaus National Forest, and the proposed action at this site would require a Forest Plan Amendment and Special Use Permit. The Poopenaut Pass site is located near Hetch Hetchy (outside of the designated Wilderness area) within Yosemite National Park and would require issuance of a right of way permit from the NPS. If approved, construction and installation of the communication system upgrade would likely begin in September 2008.

The EA/PMND and IS has been prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The lead agency under CEQA for the proposed project is the San Francisco Planning Department and a PMND notice follows this cover letter. The Preliminary Mitigated Negative Declaration documents the determination of the San Francisco Planning Department that the proposed project could not have a significant adverse effect on the environment (this is a CEQA specific requirement and does not constrain the NEPA decision process). The NPS and USFS are the co-lead agencies under NEPA, because the proposed action would involve lands under the jurisdiction of both agencies. Comments received will be used to prepare separate Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) documents, if appropriate, for the USFS site and NPS site, respectively. Copies of the EA/IS are available for review at the following locations:

- Oakhurst Public Library, 49044 Civic Circle Drive, Oakhurst CA 93644; Mon-Thurs 10 am-6 pm, Fri-Sat 10 am-2 pm; (559) 683-4838
- Mariposa County Public Library, Next to Mariposa County Courthouse, 4978 10th Street in Mariposa; Mon and Sat 9:30 am – 2 pm, Tues and Thurs 9:30 am – 6 pm, Weds and Fri 9:30 am – 5:30 pm; (209) 966-2140

- Groveland Ranger District, 24545 Highway 120, Groveland, CA 95321; Mon-Fri 8 am – 4:30 pm, Sat 8:00 am – 3:30 pm; (209) 962-7825

Public and agency participation has been a key element in the planning process. The NPS and FS held scoping meetings and conducted a formal 30-day public scoping period in Spring 2006 to solicit ideas and concerns from park and forest visitors, staff, organizations, community members, and other agencies. NPS and FS held joint public Open Houses in Yosemite Valley. In addition, a public site tour of the proposed project siting options within Yosemite National Park in the Poopenaut Pass vicinity was held on March 10, 2006.

The publication of this document begins the public review and comment period for the *Hetch Hetchy Communication System Upgrade Project EA/PMND and IS*. On October 31, 2007, the NPS will host a public Open House (1-5 pm) in the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center Auditorium, where the public can review project information, speak with knowledgeable staff, and submit comments.

Information on this project can be viewed online at [www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/hetchyproject.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/hetchyproject.htm). Copies of the document are available at the libraries noted above, or you may request a copy of the EA (CD or hardcopy) via phone, e-mail, or written request to:

Superintendent  
Yosemite National Park  
Attn: Hetch Hetchy Communication System  
Upgrade Project  
P.O. Box 577  
Yosemite, CA 95389

Phone: (209) 379-1365  
Fax: (209) 379-1294  
Email: [yose\\_planning@nps.gov](mailto:yose_planning@nps.gov)

District Ranger  
Groveland Ranger District  
Attn: Hetch Hetchy Communication System  
Upgrade Project  
24545 Highway 120  
Groveland, CA 95321

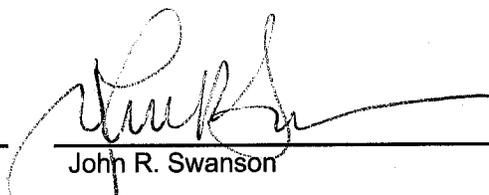
Phone: (209) 962-7825  
Fax: (209) 962-7412  
Email: [comments-pacificsouthwest-stanislaus-groveland@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-pacificsouthwest-stanislaus-groveland@fs.fed.us)

Written comments on the EA/IS must be postmarked no later than November 2, 2007 and may be sent by mail, fax, or e-mail to the park or forest addresses listed above.

We welcome your participation and appreciate your interest in this planning process.

Sincerely,

  
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Michael J. Tollefson  
Yosemite National Park, Superintendent

  
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John R. Swanson  
Stanislaus National Forest, Groveland District  
Ranger