



San Francisco Bay Area Regional Water System Information Sheet

8/07

Water is basic to all life. Preservation and protection of aquatic resources is key to biodiversity. Water quality and quantity are integral to issues such as energy, land use, and maintenance of a healthy environment for plants, wildlife and humanity. **Water is a public resource, and proper management of water is essential so that present and future generations may survive and flourish.**

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), a five-member body appointed by the Mayor of San Francisco, manages the San Francisco Regional Water System, a complex system connecting the Hetch Hetchy Valley, Tuolumne River and Crystal Springs Reservoir. **The system provides Hetch Hetchy water, flowing more than 160 miles from Yosemite National Park to the San Francisco Bay Area.** It is driven wholly by gravity except where local watershed-treated waters are introduced. It supplies high quality water to 2.4 million residential, commercial and industrial consumers in the Bay Area, including most of the San Francisco peninsula as well as Fremont, Hayward, and several cities in the Santa Clara Valley.

The Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA) represents the interests of 26 of these cities and water districts, and two private utilities, which purchase water wholesale from the San Francisco Regional Water System. These entities provide water to 1.7 million people in Alameda, Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. A vast majority of BAWSCA's water (67%) comes from the SFPUC system.

SFPUC has determined its long-neglected water system is in dire need of repair. To address the problem, the agency is engaged in a massive, **\$4.3 billion Water System Improvement Program (WSIP)**, consisting of projects to repair, replace, and seismically upgrade several of the pipelines, tunnels, and reservoirs that are part of the system. This includes regional projects as well as projects specific to San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Alameda and San Joaquin counties.

The Tuolumne River, a Federal Wild and Scenic river, serves as the primary source of water for the SFPUC water system. **The threat of increased demand by the SFPUC from the Tuolumne has resulted in its listing as an endangered river by the organization American Rivers.** The river has the largest run of wild salmon in the San Joaquin Valley, world-famous whitewater runs, and some of the best wildlife habitat in the entire Sierra Nevada. The Tuolumne watershed supports many species of wildlife, including bald eagles, spotted owls, prairie falcons, and a healthy wild trout fishery enjoyed by anglers. The watershed, blessed with such abundance, provides for not only wildlife diversity, but economic diversity as well.

The SFPUC WSIP should have as its primary goal the provision of an affordable, reliable system of high quality water for the users of the Bay Area, able to withstand earthquakes and other natural events. **The Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter is an active partner in the WSIP planning process. We, along with the Bay Area Water Stewards (BAWS), a coalition which includes the Sierra Club, SF Bay Chapter, The Tuolumne River Trust, and many other environmental organizations, support**

reasonable water system upgrades but oppose any projects which would increase the amount of water diverted from the Tuolumne River. Together with our fellow coalition members we are working to strengthen environmental protection and conservation policy in the agency's program.

The SFPUC, in its Water System Improvement Program (WSIP), should explore alternative ways to upgrade the water system without significant negative environmental impacts.

The program should include:

- Seismic upgrade and repairs necessary to maintain system reliability and high water quality,
- Current or reduced levels of water diversions from the Tuolumne River,
- No increased capacity to divert water to the SFPUC Water System,
- Investments in water conservation and recycling projects to meet increases in future demand,
- Seismic retrofit of Calaveras Reservoir, but no expansion of capacity beyond 98,600 acre feet,
- Retrofit of San Joaquin Pipelines # 1, 2, and 3, but no construction of a fourth Pipeline, and
- Funding for system-wide environmental enhancements.

The SFPUC needs to ensure that the WSIP:

1. Protects and improves the health of the Tuolumne River, Alameda Creek and Pilarcitos Creek watersheds,
2. Focuses on the most necessary repairs and fiscal responsibility,
3. Engages in regional cooperation to diversify the water supply, and
4. Meets increases in future demand through investments in water conservation and recycling.

References for Further Information

For more information about the SFPUC's regional water system, please visit: <http://sfwater.org>

For more information about BAWSCA, please visit: <http://www.bawasca.org/>

The BAWSCA *Annual Survey FY 2005-2006* is available at: [http://www.bawasca.org/docs/BAWSCASurveyFY05-06Revised\(2\).pdf](http://www.bawasca.org/docs/BAWSCASurveyFY05-06Revised(2).pdf)

For more information about the September 28, 2006 Sustainable Water Supply Briefing, please visit: http://sfwater.org/detail.cfm/MC_ID/13/MSC_ID/165/C_ID/3228/Keyword/Sustainable%20Water%20Supply%20Briefing

The Pacific Institute released two especially significant reports;

"The World's Water 2004-2005," available at: www.pacinst.org/press_center/the_worlds_water_2004-2005/index.htm, and "Waste Not, Want Not – Urban Usage Report," available at: www.pacinst.org/reports/urban_usage/

The Bay Institute released a report entitled, "The Bay Institute Ecological Scorecard: 2005 San Francisco Bay Index," which measures conditions for the whole Bay. The report links deteriorating health of the Bay to decreased water flows from area creeks and rivers. You can find it at: www.bay.org/main.htm

For more information about the Tuolumne River Watershed, please visit the Tuolumne River Trust Web site. The Tuolumne River Trust report, *From the Tuolumne to the Tap: Pursuing a Sustainable Water Solution for the Bay Area*, shows that the SFPUC water plan is based on inflated projections of future water needs and fails to pursue sustainable measures that would protect the Tuolumne River. The report and appendices are available for download at: www.tuolumne.org

For more information about the Sierra Club, Loma Prieta Chapter's efforts on behalf of our regional water system and watersheds, and to see our Water Sustainability Campaign's report, *Improving Water Conservation: Opportunities for San Francisco Bay Area Water Supply Agencies*, please visit <http://www.lomaprieta.sierraclub.org/WaterSustainability.html>, or contact Bill Young at 650-390-8494, bill.young@sierraclub.org