

The Tuolumne Cascade

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The Tuolumne River
Trust's mission is to
promote the stewardship
of the Tuolumne River
and its tributaries to
ensure a healthy
watershed.



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A BIG WIN FOR THE TUOLUMNE

By Peter Drekmeier

A year ago The Tuolumne River faced a Water System Improvement Program (WSIP) that would have allowed the diversion of an additional 25 million gallons of water per day – enough to fill 1,000 swimming pools, every day. Fortunately for the River, on October 30 the SFPUC approved an alternative program, the Phased WSIP, which will cap water sales at current levels until 2018 and focus on water conservation and recycling rather than on any additional diversions. This was a huge victory – the first time we've ever had a cap on sales. We've changed the way the SFPUC does business!



The Wild & Scenic Tuolumne River

Photo Courtesy of Ken Mendocza

The October 30th SFPUC meeting was inspiring. There was an overflow crowd, with dozens of articulate and passionate speakers from the Sierra to the South Bay. It was wonderful to see so many people committed to the health of the Tuolumne River and other local watersheds.

We now have ten years to reexamine water demand projections and ramp up conservation and recycling programs. The SFPUC will also study the potential impacts of climate change on future river conditions, and complete a biological study of the Tuolumne to help determine when additional water should be released from Hetch Hetchy to better benefit wildlife and vegetation downstream.

Although greatly improved, the Phased WSIP still includes a provision that would allow the diversion of an additional 2 million gallons of water per day from the Tuolumne to fill reservoirs following extended droughts. However, the Commissioners made it clear they wanted to see the Tuolumne protected, and included several strongly-worded amendments aimed at minimizing the need for additional diversions. They directed staff to set aggressive water conservation and recycling goals, and to provide regular updates on water use projections to identify potential threats to the Tuolumne before they become problematic.

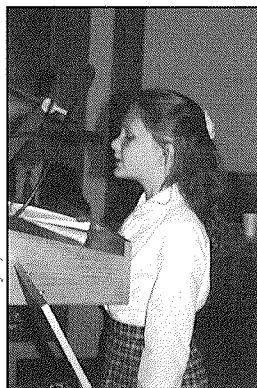


Photo courtesy of Dan Bacher

*Catherine Davidson
speaking at the October
30th SFPUC Hearing
in San Francisco.*

It is clear the SFPUC is taking its role as a steward of the Tuolumne seriously. No one wants to see more water diverted from a Wild & Scenic River, so now we must all work together to make sure adequate measures are in place to reduce our dependence on the River.

In addition, earlier this year the SFPUC increased its water conservation budget from \$1.8 to \$2.8 million, and introduced a retrofit-on-resale ordinance that would require property owners to upgrade toilets, faucets and showerheads with ultra-efficient models prior to sale. Meanwhile, the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), which represents the SFPUC's 27 wholesale customers, commissioned a water conservation and recycling implementation plan. We're on our way!

Many thanks to all of you who supported our Bay Area campaign. Whether you attended a hearing, wrote a letter, or contributed funds, you made a huge difference! The River and wildlife that depend on it are eternally grateful, and the Trust looks forward to working with you on the next phase of the campaign – promoting water conservation and recycling.