

Project Labor Agreement in the Works for Hetch Hetchy Seismic Upgrades

The leaders of several Bay Area Building Trades Councils and unions met with the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission at the end of July to hear about the proposed seismic improvements for the Hetch Hetchy water system. The SFPUC and building trades were expected to negotiate a Project Labor Agreement for the \$4.3 billion project.

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The Hetch Hetchy system supplies San Francisco and many other Bay Area cities with about 260 million gallons of water daily, with about 85 percent from Sierra Nevada snowmelt stored in the Hetch Hetchy reservoir in the Yosemite National Park. San Francisco voters passed Measure A in 2002 to issue \$1.6 billion in bonds to finance part of the improvements. Only a small portion, \$3 million, will be federal funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

SFPUC Project Manager Tony Irons attended the meeting and presented a slide show on the various components of the upgrade. He noted that the language of Measure A urged negotiation of a PLA. He said that public sector construction had become less attractive to contractors but that with pre-qualification of contractors and a negotiated agreement, the SFPUC and contractors would be successful. "It's important that we have a PLA, because there's a lot of work," he said.

Some of the components of the SFPUC Water improvement plan are:

- Construction of an advanced water disinfection treatment facility
- A new seismically-designed pipeline through Sunol Valley in Alameda County along side three existing pipelines
- 3,000 feet of 66 inch buried welded steel pipe with seismic design at the Calaveras Fault and seismic retrofits of existing pipes
- Replacement of the existing Calaveras dam with a seismically designed dam of equal height and capacity
- A 21 mile water pipeline from Fremont to Redwood City, including a 5-mile tunnel under the San Francisco Bay
- Replacement of three existing electric pump casings at the San Antonio Pump Station
- A new Irvington tunnel, 3.4 miles long, 10 feet in diameter with new portal connections to the Bay Division pipelines
- Expansion of the Sunol Valley Water treatment Plant to treat an additional 40 million gallons daily of drinking water
- Seismic upgrades between two crossover facilities to be built on either side of the Hayward Fault Crossing in Fremont
- A new Crystal Springs Bypass Tunnel in San Mateo County—a critical link between the Hetch Hetchy supply and the Peninsula.
- Improvements to the Baden/San Pedro Valve Lot on the Peninsula, including seismic upgrades

- Improvements to the Lower Crystal Springs Dam to meet new standards
- Seismic upgrades to the University Mound North Basin reservoir in San Francisco which serves 35 percent of the City
- Development of recycled water projects on the Westside of San Francisco for use by Golden Gate Park and other parks, expected to save up to 1.5 billion gallons of potable water annually
- Development of supplemental groundwater supplies in San Francisco.

SFPUC General Manager Susan Leal said that the utility was being aggressive with the project's schedule, saying that every day of delays costs \$250,000. "I think it's important for us to have a meeting of the minds and have a project with good jobs for the trades," she said. "We're moving along on schedule but it's important that we have a PLA to get the workforce going. The PLA is beneficial to us." The overall project includes about 77 different projects in Alameda, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Stanislaus Counties and will provide work for the construction trades for 10 to 13 years.

The City's largest capital project ever will include upgrading pipelines, pumping stations, tunnels and dams along the system's 167-mile long aqueduct. The aging system is vulnerable to earthquakes and crosses five major fault lines capable of generating a magnitude 7.5 earthquake.

"Were a major earthquake to occur there's the potential that up to two and a half million people would be without water," said the SFPUC's Irons. "Without water, the effects on the population would be catastrophic." He noted that a recent study predicted that a major earthquake would occur in the Bay Area within the next 20 to 30 years.

Besides seismic reliability, the other goals of the system's upgrades are reliability of water delivery, water quality, and water supply. Irons said that the water supply is somewhat controversial as the City gets 85 percent of its water supply from a National Park. A recent study by the state looked at restoring the Hetch Hetchy valley to its pre-dam state and a group called Restore Hetch Hetchy has proposed demolishing the O'Shaughnessy dam that created the reservoir, which holds about 360,000 acre-feet of water.

While most of the upgrades will occur outside San Francisco, all will be San Francisco contracts. Susan Leal said that the system is managed by the City, with the SFPUC acting as an "Enterprise Department, with members of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers Local 21 in the City responsible for management and maintenance of the system.

"It's a City-run project and definitely a union project," said Leal. "There's a certain amount of pride in that. Hetch Hetchy was built by City workers, not private contractors like Bechtel or Haliburton."

Irons said that some of the larger projects would begin after the first of the year, and that since the bidding process would need to start six months before that, the time for negotiating a PLA was at hand. Meetings were scheduled to begin in mid-August and early September, and will include representatives from the AFL-CIO's Building Trades Department in Washington, D.C. The BCTD's Secretary-Treasurer Sean McGarvey attended the July 28 meeting. Members of the Laborers, Ironworkers, Plumbers, and Cement Masons unions also attended the meeting.