

# DRAFT Natural Values

From its alpine headwaters, along its steep descent into the long, flat Yosemite Valley, and then through a deeply incised gorge, the Merced River descends 9,000 feet in elevation and spans five major life zones. Approximately 10 miles to the south, this sequence is repeated along the South Fork Merced River, whose dramatic descent is briefly quieted in the Wawona area. Along these courses, the rivers sustain a rare diversity of robust, interrelated, and largely intact ecosystems that result from interactions among geologic, hydrologic, and biologic processes.

The natural values found within these protected river corridors provide exemplary ecological integrity that extends beyond the two river systems. These natural values also offer unique, rare, or exemplary opportunities to conduct scientific research that have regional or national significance.



Keith Walklett, Yosemite National Park archive

The Merced River's geology, hydrology and biology are interrelated

## GEOLOGIC PROCESSES ORV



Pam Meierding

Geologic processes are the foundation for the hydrology and biology of the Merced and South Fork Merced rivers

## HYDROLOGIC PROCESSES ORV



Yosemite National Park archive

The hydrologic variability of the rivers range from rapids and steep drop-offs to calm meanders

## BIOLOGIC ORV



Jen Nergesian

Ecosystems shaped by the Merced and South Fork Merced rivers support diverse and interrelated plants and animals

*“Your overriding concern should be sensitivity to environmental matters, strict attention to the recommendations of biologists and other scientists, and an undeviating devotion to the values of protecting the park and preserving its natural features.”*

1999 Merced River Plan public comment (#197)