



Merced Wild and Scenic River Values Draft Baseline Conditions Report

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National Park Service, Yosemite National Park



**MERCED WILD AND SCENIC RIVER VALUES
DRAFT BASELINE CONDITIONS REPORT**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The *Merced Wild and Scenic River Values Draft Baseline Conditions Report* serves as a foundational document for the Merced River Plan (MRP). It provides concise, focused, summarized information on river values and their condition. Condition of river values is crucial information in the development of the plan. It provides this information to planners, decision-makers, stakeholders, and members of the public, who are critical participants in the development of the plan. It is a “quick reference,” with extensive references included for those who desire additional detailed information.

The report describes the condition of the river values: (1) free-flowing condition, (2) water quality, and (3) proposed outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs). This report is tightly focused on the condition of these river values and is not intended to describe other environmental conditions. The description of conditions is scientifically based, with scientific references and other sources of information listed at the end of each section. Following the direction provided by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) and subsequent case law, this report describes conditions at the time of designation and at the present time. This report may continue to be revised and amended as new information becomes available, particularly information from ongoing scientific studies.¹

Each section contains:

- A brief description of the river value addressed by that section
- Background information for that river value
- Condition of the river value in 1987 when the Merced Wild and Scenic River was designated
- Current condition of the river value
- Preliminary management considerations

Preliminary management considerations are river value conditions that should be addressed by the MRP in order to protect and enhance river values. They were developed from information in this report, from park staff input, information from the ORV workshops in the spring of 2011, and public comment on a previous draft baseline conditions report released in April 2011. To be considered a preliminary management consideration, a river value condition may have potential to have a segment-wide adverse impact or may be experiencing a downward trend to reach the level of segment-wide adverse impacts if left untreated. Preliminary management considerations also include actions or programs conducted to protect and enhance river values, such as long-term monitoring of water quality.

An earlier draft of this report was released in April 2011, and the public was provided the opportunity to review the report and provide feedback. This draft, released in July 2012, incorporates new information about river values analyzed from recently completed scientific studies using 2010 data. As stated above, this report will continue to be revised as new information becomes available and will be considered final when the Record of Decision for the MRP is signed.

¹ In some cases, the supporting information for description of conditions comes from non-scientific disciplines such as history or architecture, and is considered scholarly instead of scientific. The supporting information may directly or indirectly describe the ORV conditions, particularly when describing conditions at time of designation because information from that era is sparse.

