

Recreational Outstandingly Remarkable Value

The Merced River and South Fork Merced River offer diverse, river-related recreation, including the opportunity to recreate in the peerless setting of the Yosemite Valley, the Merced River Gorge, and throughout the entire river corridors. Recreating in these areas is inextricably linked to the dynamic natural processes in the Merced River that have helped form and continue to contribute to the scenery and evocative landscape. Along both rivers, people are able to connect to the natural world while engaging in activities that are enhanced by the quality of the landscape. Within these surroundings, people of all ages and abilities enjoy exemplary experiences that often create personal memories, traditions, and multi-generational bonding among family and friends.



Vernal Fall, photo: Keith Walklett, Yosemite National Park archive



Painter near Chapel, photo: Pam Meierding



Ranger Leland Tamay near Yosemite Falls, photo: Pam Meierding



Backpacking along South Fork, photo: Mandy Varice



Family picnic, photo: Jen Nersesian

The Merced and South Fork river corridors offer a diverse range of activities that are enhanced by the dramatic scenery and opportunity to observe the continuously changing natural world

Supporting evidence and examples of the Recreational ORV include, but are not limited to:

- Recreating within the Merced River corridor evokes a full range of senses, from the awe-inspiring views of the high granite cliffs in Yosemite Valley to the roar and vibrations caused by the wildness of the river during spring runoff in the Merced River Gorge.
- When hiking and backpacking close to the river, such as along the Mist Trail near Vernal and Nevada Falls, visitors can feel the spray and see and hear the plunging waters.
- The Merced River's calm meander through the Yosemite Valley provides opportunities for swimming and floating amidst spectacular scenery, such as Half Dome and Yosemite Falls.
- Within the Merced River and South Fork Merced River corridors, sights and sounds of the water shape the experience of activities such as writing, contemplation, nature study, photography, artistic expression, and fishing.
- Recreating in the river corridors, and participating in Yosemite National Park's education and interpretation programs along the rivers acquaint visitors with river-dependent wildlife and vegetation, as well as the sights, sounds, and energy of flowing water. This creates a connection with the natural world and fosters a stewardship ethic outside the park boundary.
- Camping and picnicking are two of many exemplary experiences within the river corridors that create personal memories, traditions, and multi-generational bonding among families and friends.