BOATING SAFETY

- ▲ Be sure your whitewater boating skills are equal to Class III, IV and V difficulty levels. Weigh your judgment with the thought that you and your passengers may be forced to swim any rapid you cannot boat. If you are unsure of your skills, then it is strongly recommended that you take the river trip with an experienced whitewater guide.
- ▲ Scout rapids thoroughly from shore even if they have been run before. New debris or logs may produce new hazards.
- A River flow levels change and hazards vary with them.
- ▲ Be alert. Stay clear of overhanging branches and partially submerged obstacles.
- Always allow the craft ahead of you to pass through a rapid before you begin your approach. This will prevent a double disaster if the leading craft encounters trouble and blocks the channel.
- ▲ If your boat capsizes, stay on the upstream side, preferably at the end of the craft. This allows better vision to enable you to swim the boat to shore. More importantly, it reduces the chance of being pinned between a rock and the boat. Hold onto the floating boat unless you can increase your safety by abandoning it.
- ▲ If thrown out of the boat, float downstream feet first and at the surface. This enables you to fend off rocks and other obstacles and reduces the likelihood of head injuries and foot entrapment.
- ▲ Boating and alcohol can be a DEADLY MIX!

 The effects of alcohol result in the inability to react safely to a dangerous boating situation.
- ▲ One Coast Guard-approved flotation device must be available for each person on board a

- vessel, and it is strongly recommended that they be worn. Water need not be fast to be fatal - even Class III water.
- ▲ Wear protective wet suits. Bring dry clothing and shoes in a sealed bag.
- Protective footgear and helmets are always advisable.
- ▲ Include a boat repair kit, air pump, bail bucket, extra oars and paddles.
- ▲ Carry appropriate river rescue equipment (throw bag, bow line, rescue lines, etc.).

AREA REGULATIONS & TRIP TIPS

- ▲ Littering is prohibited. Pack it in; pack it out.
- ▲ Discharging firearms is prohibited within 1/2 mile of the center of the Merced River.
- ▲ Fireworks are prohibited.
- ▲ Motor vehicles not licensed for highway use are prohibited unless authorized by special permit.
- ▲ Camping is limited to 14 days.
- Parking on any portion of the traffic lanes of roads or highways is prohibited.
- ▲ Quiet hours are from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m.
- ▲ Dogs and other pets are not allowed to run.

 They must be leashed or under control by owner.
- ▲ Leave word with friends or relatives as to where you are going and when you expect to return.
- A Poison oak is common and can cause severe

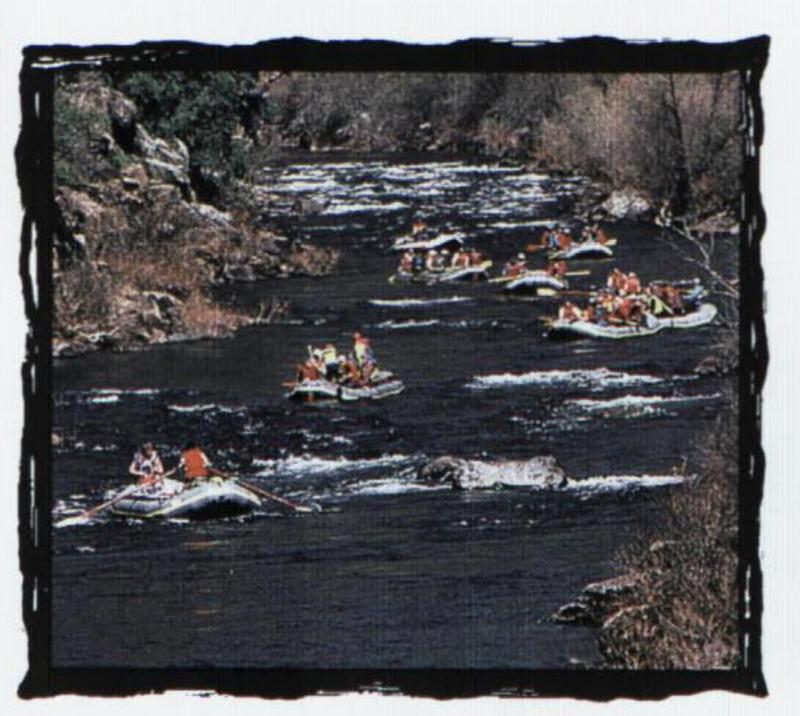
- skin irritation. Avoid contact with any part of the plant at any time of year.
- A Rattlesnakes are in the area. Be careful where you place your hands and feet.
- ▲ Observe fishing and hunting regulations. They are designed to provide fish and wildlife for present and future sport and enjoyment.
- ▲ Heat can be an enemy in mid-summer when canyon temperatures rise to over 100 degrees (F). Wear a hat, drink plenty of water and avoid overexertion.
- ▲ Bring your own drinking water or purify all water taken from streams.
- Public telephones are located along Hwy. 140 at El Portal, Cedar Lodge and Midpines.

Regulations are enforced by the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service.

WHITEWATER

The 28 miles of the Merced River from Red Bud to Bagby form a trail for boaters from early April through June. Boating trail use is sometimes interrupted in mid-spring due to excessively high streamflow. Flows in winter months occasionally permit boating, but boaters rarely make this run due to cold water and threat of bad weather.

The Merced is often hazardous and should be attempted only by those with sufficient skill. It is rated Class III through Class V with one mandatory portage (see back). Other rapids may require portaging depending upon daily river flow conditions. The following descriptions are based on a Class I through Class VI



guide established by the American Whitewater Affiliation. This is a partial list.

Class III - Intermediate: Rapids with moderate, irregular waves which may be difficult to avoid and can swamp an open canoe. Complex maneuvers in fast current and good boat control in tight passages or around ledges are often required; large waves or strainers may be present but are easily avoided. Strong eddies and powerful current effects can be found, particularly on large-volume rivers. Scouting is advisable for inexperienced parties. Injuries while swimming are rare; self-rescue is usually easy, but group assistance may be required to avoid long swims.

Class IV - Advanced: Intense, powerful but predictable rapids, requiring precise boat handling in turbulent water. Depending on the character of the river, it may feature large, unavoidable waves and holes or constricted passages demanding fast maneuvers under pressure. A fast, reliable eddy turn may be needed to initiate maneuvers, scout rapids, or rest. Rapids may require "must" moves above dangerous hazards. Scouting is necessary the first time down. Risk of injury to swimmers is

moderate to high, and water conditions may make self-rescue difficult. Group assistance is often essential but requires practiced skills. A strong eskimo roll is highly recommended.

Class V - Expert: Extremely long, obstructed, or very violent rapids which expose a paddler to above-average endangerment. Drops may contain large, unavoidable waves and holes or steep congested chutes with complex, demanding routes. Rapids may continue for long distances between pools, demanding a high level of fitness. What eddies exist may be small, turbulent, or difficult. Swims are dangerous, and rescue is difficult even for experts. A very reliable eskimo roll, proper equipment, extensive experience, and practiced rescue skills are essential for survival.

WATER CONDITIONS

Water flow can change quickly. As a result, current velocity, wave size and difficulty of rapids can quickly change. Increased water flow can cause a safe trip at one class to become extremely hazardous. Check the flows before you embark on your trip downstream. The Merced River Canyon is included as "inflow to Lake McClure."

Caution: Water level flows above 3,000 cubic feet per second should be run only by the extremely skilled boater.

Cold drains your strength, and robs you of the ability to make sound decisions on matters affecting your survival. Cold water immersion, because of the initial shock and the rapid heat loss which follows, can be very dangerous. Dress appropriately for bad weather and sudden immersion in the water. When the water

temperature is less than 50 degrees (F), a wetsuit or drysuit is essential for protection if you swim. You should also carry waterproof matches and a change of clothing in a waterproof bag. If, after prolonged exposure, a person experiences uncontrollable shaking, loss of coordination, or difficulty speaking, he or she is hypothermic and needs assistance.

COMMERCIAL RAFTING

Commercial rafting outfitters operate under permits issued annually by the Bureau of Land Management. For current information contact:



U.S. Bureau of Land Management Folsom Resource Area 63 Natoma Street Folsom, CA 95630 (916) 985-4474 Mariposa: (209) 966-3192



U.S. Forest Service
Mariposa Ranger District
Highway 140 at 49 N.
P.O. Box 747
Mariposa, CA 95338
(209) 966-3638



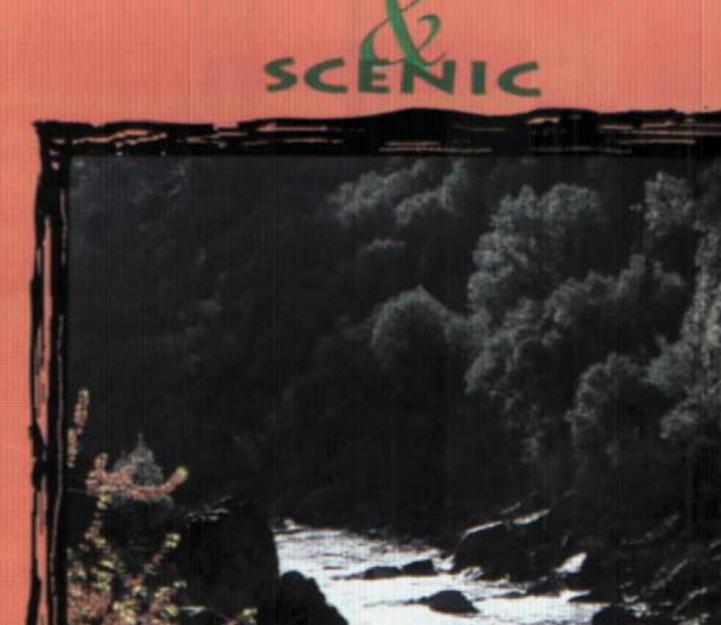
We've moved:
DEPARTMENT OF BOATING AND WATERWAYS
2000 EVERGREEN STREET, SUITE 100
SACRAMENTO, CA 95815-3896
(916) 263-1331
(888) 326-2822 (Tollfree)

The California Department of Boating and Waterways

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, CALL 9-1-1

MILD WILD

A BOATING TRAIL GUIDE TO THE



HISTORY OF THE MERCED RIVER CANYON

The California Department of Boating and Waterways and the Bureau of Land Management have published this Boating Trail Guide to provide basic facts and information to assist you in planning a safe and enjoyable river visit.

The Merced River originates in Yosemite National Park on the crest of the Sierra Nevada at an elevation of 11,000 feet. The river flows wild and undammed until it reaches Lake McClure, formed by the New Exchequer Dam near Merced Falls. From Lake McClure, the river continues into the San Joaquin Valley and joins the San Joaquin River near Newman.

Lieutenant Gabriel Moraga of the Mexican Army named the Merced in 1806 when he and his band of soldiers came upon the river at the end of a 40-mile march. In gratitude, he called the river El Rio Nuestra Senora de la Merced (The River of Our Lady of Mercy).

The history of the navigable portions of the upper Merced River is one of miners, railroads, and lumberjacks. The gold miners arrived in the 1850's. The two most productive mines along the river were Hite's Cove and Clearing House. The Hite's Cove mine produced more than \$3 million in gold. Gold miners still operate dredges on the Merced, especially during periods of low flow and warm

The Yosemite Valley Railroad parallels the north bank of the river. Between 1907 and 1945, the railroad carried passengers from Merced to El Portal, providing the most popu-



lar transport to and from Yosemite National Park.

Large stands of sugar pine once grew on both sides of the Merced River Canyon. In 1910, the Yosemite Lumber Company began to harvest this timber and continued to do so until 1942. Logs were transported down from the surrounding ridges, loaded onto Yosemite Valley Railroad cars, and then taken 60 miles to the mill at Merced Falls.

The history of the Merced River continues to unfold as the river has been recognized for its outstanding, free-flowing condition. The El Portal-to-Bagby stretch of the main stem and all of the South Fork have recently been included into the National Wild and Scenic River system. The stretch from Briceburg to Bagby is currently under study for potential addition to the system.

PLANTS & WILDLIFE

Birds: The abundant and varied bird life along the river include mourning doves, Cassin's finches, California quail, dark-eyed juncos, woodpeckers, dippers, great blue herons, scrub jays, and redwinged blackbirds. Red-tailed hawks, turkey vultures, cliff swallows, and canyon wrens are plentiful. he common meganser often rests along the river, and occasionally, a magnificent bald eagle may be seen.

Plants: California poppy, white alder, Oregon ash, oaks, poison oak, big-leaf maple, Indian rhubarb, buttonbush, and willow are found along the tributaries of the Merced River. Higher up the surrounding slopes, whiteleaf manzanita and the remnants of once-larger stands of sugar pine can be observed.

Mammals: Most prevalent among the many types of animals found along the Merced Canyon are squirrel, raccoon, jackrabbit, bats and



skunk. Observant boaters and campers may be lucky enough to spot less abundant, but nevertheless commonly seen, beaver, mule deer, coyote and, on rare occasion, bobcat.

Fish: Brown and rainbow trout and smallmouth bass are the game fish found in the Merced. Squawfish, hardhead, western sucker and sculpin

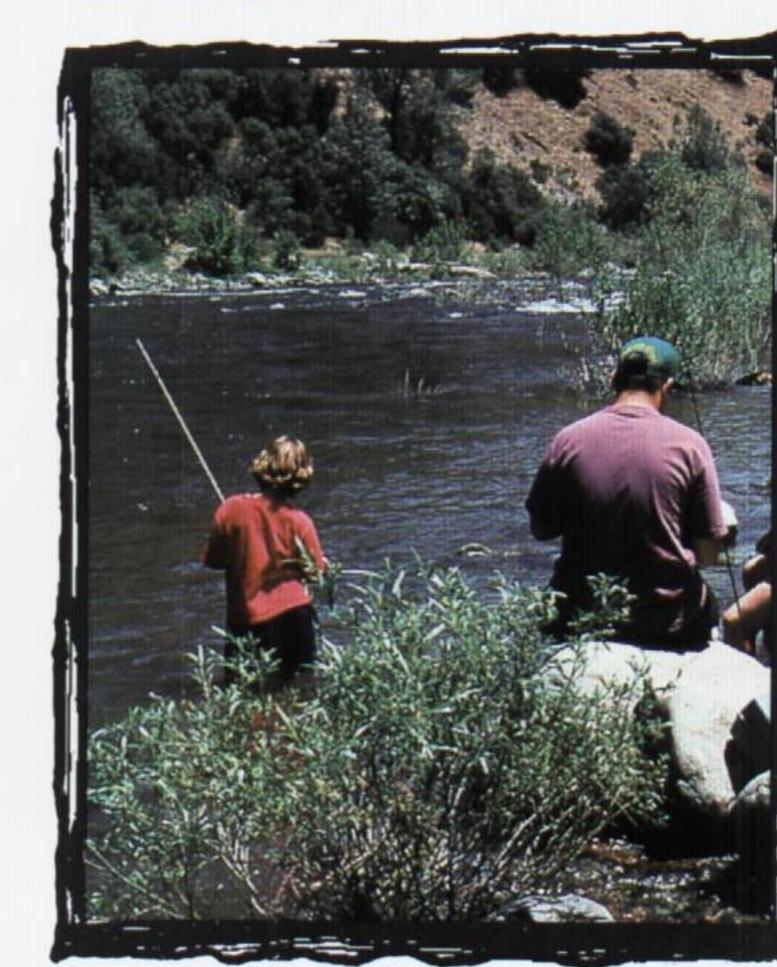
The California Department of Fish and Game stocks catchable size rainbow trout in the river from the South Fork upstream to the Foresta Bridge.

FISHING REGULATIONS

General Information: Anyone 16 years or older must have a fishing license to take fish. (See current California Sport Fishing Regulations for more information.) Licenses are available in most sporting goods stores carrying fishing equipment. Bass fishing is open all year with a limit of five fish. All bass less than 12 inches must be released.

Yosemite National Park Boundary to Foresta Bridge: This is a special fishing area that is open all year with a two-trout limit. No fish less than 12 inches may be possessed. For all species, only artificial lures with single barbless hooks may be used.

Foresta Bridge to Bagby: The trout limit is 5 fish. This area is open from the last Saturday in April through November 15.



CAMPING & HIKING

Camping is available in Sierra National Forest campgrounds located on both sides of the river. Complete facilities are available at Indian Flat and Jerseydale, which include drinking water and designated sites for camping between mid-May and mid-October.

The US Bureau of Land Management manages three camps below Briceburg. These campgrounds have toilets, but no trash collection.

Campgrounds are operated on a first-come, first-served basis; there is a 14-day limit.



The old Yosemite Valley Railroad right-ofway on the north bank of the river provides hikers with a relatively level, though mostly unshaded, river trail from near El Portal to Bagby (28 miles). Because the old railroad bridges have fallen, the swift side streams (particularly on the North Fork of the Merced) may not be crossable during wet weather and snow runoff periods. Plans are under way to improve its condition.

An alternative is the 8.5 mile trail between the Jerseydale Road trailhead and the confluence of the Merced River, which is called the South Fork.

Some lands along the river, hiking trails, and the adjacent hills are privately owned. Respect this private property where it is posted.



POISON OAK "Leaves of three, let it be"

FIRE RESTRICTIONS

The Merced River and its South Fork have been added by an act of Congress into the Wild and Scenic River system. Additional restrictions regarding activities and fire regulations apply by virtue of the designation. Persons planning a trip into the South Fork should obtain information at local Forest Service stations or at Savage's Trading Post (see map).

The Merced River Canyon is subject to closure during periods of extreme fire danger. Depending upon weather conditions, fire closures are most likely to occur from mid-July through the first of October. Campfire permits are required during fire season outside designated campgrounds. Smoking is restricted to enclosed vehicles during any stage of fire restrictions.

TO REPORT A FIRE, CALL 9-1-1

