

NORTH FORK

KERN

WILD AND SCENIC

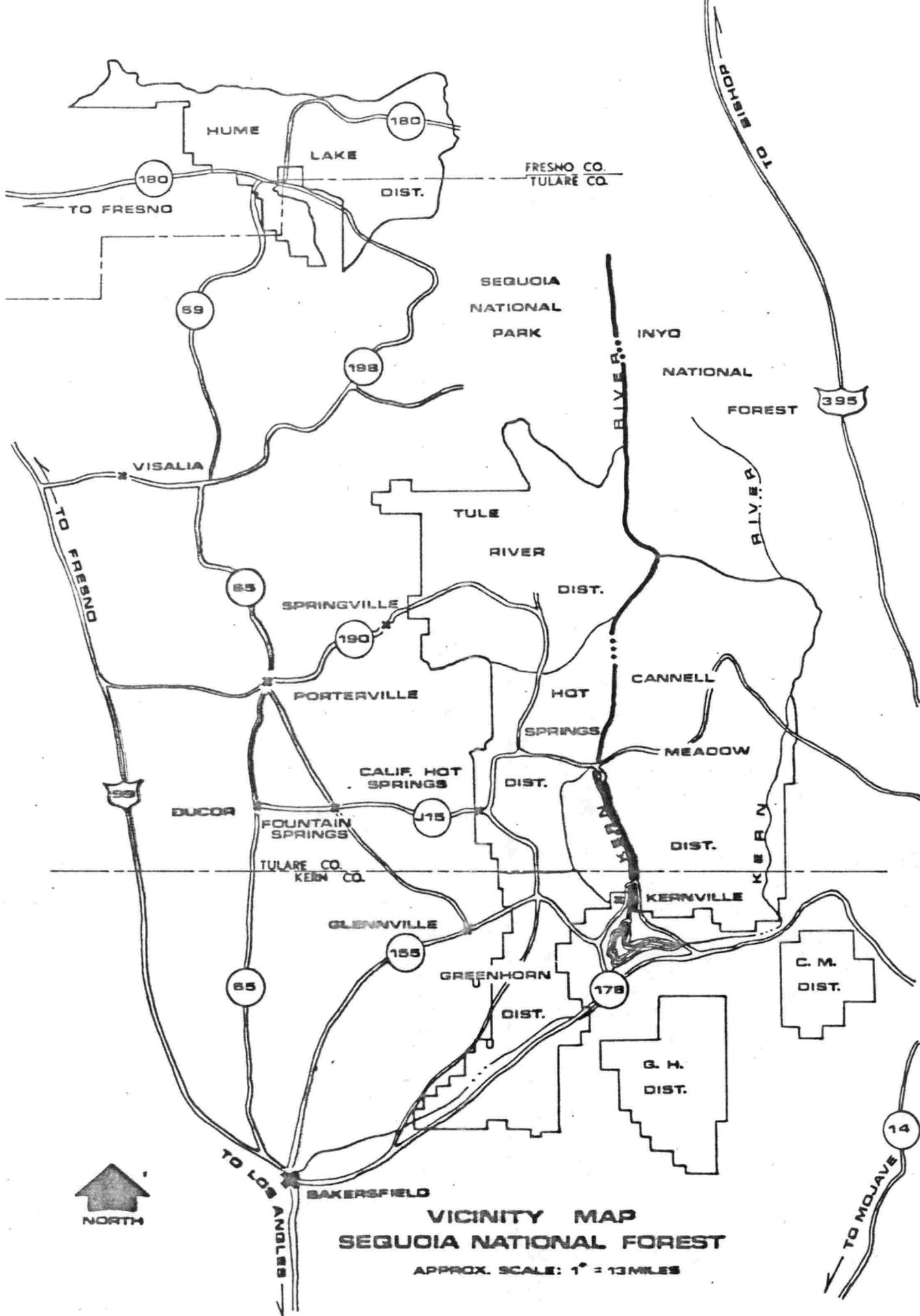
RIVER STUDY

**NORTH FORK KERN
WILD AND SCENIC RIVER
STUDY**

SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST

SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK

INYO NATIONAL FOREST



**VICINITY MAP
SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST**

APPROX. SCALE: 1" = 13 MILES

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. North Fork Kern Wild and Scenic River Study

The Sequoia National Forest has started the preparation of the North Fork Kern River Wild and Scenic River Study.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1271, et seq.), as amended by the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, directed the Study of the main stem of the North Fork Kern River to determine its eligibility and suitability for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The USDA-Forest Service, as the lead agency, is commencing the Study and the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement is scheduled for completion in June 1981, followed by a three-month review period. The Final Environmental Impact Statement will be filed about February 1982.

The Study will analyze and evaluate a range of alternatives which will include at least: (1) a "no-action" or non-designation alternative which represents a continuation of present use and management, (2) one or more alternatives which will recommend that segments of the River be designated and classified as wild, scenic, or recreation, and (3) designation and classification of all eligible segments of the River.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility criteria are used to determine whether the River qualifies to be in the National System. A wild, scenic, or recreational river area eligible to be included in the system is a free-flowing stream, where the adjacent land possesses one or more values described as outstandingly remarkable for the following resources: scenic, recreational, geologic, historic, cultural, fish and wildlife, or other similar considerations (Wild and Scenic River Act, Section 2(b)).

Classification Criteria

If the River is found to be eligible, classification criteria are used to classify the River segments prior to developing alternative ways to manage the River. These are the same classifications assigned to the River if Congress includes the River in the National System.

Wild River Areas: Rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted.

Scenic River Areas: Rivers or sections of rivers that are

free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.

Recreational River Areas: Rivers or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past. (Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Section 2(b)).

B. Where Do We Go From Here?

The Sequoia National Forest will use your Issue responses in formulating the final list of Issues to be developed in the Study. Each Issue will then be fully described and evaluated in the Study Report and the accompanying Environmental Impact Statement. A single alternative will be selected and recommended for implementation.

The purpose of this meeting is to give the public every opportunity to raise questions and make suggestions about possible Issues concerning the inclusion of the North Fork Kern River in the National Wild and Scenic River System.

A Draft Study Report and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, containing a recommended plan and alternative plans, will be prepared. These Draft Reports will be subject to public review by interested individuals as well as local, regional, and national agencies and organized groups.

Please keep in mind that you are participating in a field level study. The draft documents are subject to revision at the higher levels of the Departments of Agriculture and Interior, and may also be revised at the Presidential Administration level. When the Administration is satisfied with the documents, a final proposal will be transmitted to Congress. Congress may or may not elect to implement the Administration's proposal.

The Study Report given to Congress will provide resource information alternatives, and a recommended course of action. The Environmental Impact Statement will, among other things, provide a discussion of the environmental implications of the alternatives. It will also provide a detailed analysis of the probable environmental consequences that would result if the recommended alternative was implemented. In any case, the final decision is up to Congress.

II. PRELIMINARY ISSUES

This Study will provide eligibility criteria for the Kern River and make a recommendation to Congress as to its suitability for legislative classification as a Wild and Scenic River. The Study will be

developed under the administration of the Sequoia National Forest and in cooperation with Sequoia National Park, Inyo National Forest, and the State of California.

Contents of the Study will include:

1. Major public issues,
2. Description of the lands and resources of the North Fork of the Kern River,
3. Management goals and objectives for the River, and
4. The vicinity, timing, standards, and guidelines for proposed and probable recreational activities.

Some Preliminary Issues the Study may address are:

- a. Determine which River segments should be classified wild, scenic, or recreation, and locate the boundaries of each.
- b. Define which lands or interests (if any) need to be acquired within the final authorized boundary for management purposes.
- c. Decide on the level of recreation experience, types of activities and kind of development which will be appropriate for each River segment.
- d. Address what influence various proposed reservoirs on the Kern River will have on the designation of the River as a National Wild and Scenic River.

How your comments can help:

You can assist the Forest Service by responding to the following questions as you read the Issues and Criteria in the Public Response Form.

1. Do you agree that the issues we have identified are important?
2. Have all the Issues from both the public and the Forest Service been identified?
3. For each identified Issue, what would full resolution be?
4. Have possible alternative resolutions been identified?
5. Are the Criteria used by the Forest Service to screen and select the Issues to be addressed clear and sufficiently discriminating?
6. Provide us with information as to why you do or do not consider the scenic, recreational, geologic, historic, cultural and fish and wildlife resources of the River to be outstandingly remarkable.

Issue identification and subsequent resolutions through the Wild and Scenic Study, may change the management of the Kern River. To insure that the change is appropriate, the Forest Service needs to answer the questions as knowledgeably as possible.

The sequence of action is:

1. Comments on Issues presented in this booklet and any new issues, provided by the public or the Forest Service, will be evaluated.
2. All Issues will be tabulated.
3. Similar Issues will be combined.
4. Comments on proposed screening Criteria and any new Criteria provided by the public will be evaluated.
5. Screening Criteria will be finalized and approved by the Forest Service responsible official.
6. Proposed Issues will be screened and a "final" set selected. What happens to each Issue will be documented.

III. PRELIMINARY SCREENING CRITERIA

Not all Issues suggested are suitable for resolution through the Wild and Scenic River Study process. Suggested Issues must be screened to establish their appropriateness for resolution through the Study. In order for an Issue to be addressed in the Study, it must meet all the following screening criteria to be addressed in the Wild and Scenic River Study.

1. Include Issues which are significant at this time and require prompt resolution.
2. Include only Issues where knowledge is sufficient to allow resolution.
3. Include Issues which can be resolved at the Forest level, (as opposed to those which must be resolved through laws, regulations, policies, and directions given in higher order planning documents).

IV. NORTH FORK KERN RIVER FACTS AND OVERVIEW

The Kern River travels 74 miles from its headwaters along the crest of the Kings-Kern Divide (elevations over 13,000 feet) in Sequoia National Park to Lake Isabella (elevation 2,600 feet). Of the several prominent Sierran rivers, only the Kern River flows from the north to the south. In addition, the Kern River is the southernmost river in the Sierra Nevada. The River Study is entirely within Tulare and Kern Counties.

Within the 74 miles of river in this Study, all but approximately 4.5 miles occur on public lands. There are 20 miles on the Sequoia National Park and 52 miles on the Sequoia National Forest, with 11 miles forming a common boundary with the Inyo National Forest in The Golden Trout Wilderness. The Kern River flows a total of 20 miles in the Golden Trout Wilderness. The section of the River south of the Wilderness to the Johnsondale Bridge and south to Lake Isabella is the portion of the River which receives the most concentrated recreation use. This is primarily due to the less rugged terrain and establishment of a paved county road adjacent to the Kern River. The characteristics of the River change greatly south of the Johnsondale Bridge to an urban environment with established campgrounds, residential areas, and the town of Kernville near Lake Isabella.

There are several trail systems that give access to the remainder of the Kern River from the Johnsondale Bridge northward to the headwaters. From the north, the most important trails are the John Muir Trail and the High Sierra Trail which are located in Sequoia National Park. Numerous trails in Sequoia National Forest and Inyo National Forest lead to the Kern River through the Golden Trout Wilderness. The volcanic rocks along portions of the Kern River were formed during the Pliocene and the Pleistocene. These volcanic rocks are primarily flows of dark gray olivine basalt. Excellent examples of these ancient basalt flows occur at the Flat Iron between the Forks of the Kern and Kern Flats. Also, large basalt areas occur along the Rincon Trail. From the Johnsondale Bridge southward to Lake Isabella, the rugged canyons disappear with a more open terrain dominated by hillsides of slates, marbles, and limestones intermixed with granitic ridges.

Vegetation along the Kern River changes dramatically from the headwaters of the Kern River to Lake Isabella. The riparian habitat is confined to nearby edges of the Kern River where the dominant trees are white alder (Alnus rhombifolia), black cottonwood (Populus trichocarpa), and numerous species of willows (Salix spp.). The willows are common in the higher elevations and additional riparian species become common from the Johnsondale Bridge to Lake Isabella such as sycamore (Platanus racemosa), ash (Fraxinus latifolia), and Fremont cottonwood (Populus fremontii).

Just beyond the riparian community are several conifer species which are restricted to certain elevations and slopes. The yellow pine forest is dominant in the Kern River Canyon, Sequoia National Park, and the upper half of the Golden Trout Wilderness. This community is dominated by the Jeffrey pine (Pinus jefferyi). Except for approximately 1.5 miles between Hell's Hole and Hole-in-the-Ground, the Kern River is accessible by established trails. The section between the southern end of the Wilderness and the Johnsondale Bridge is travelled via the Rincon Trail which parallels the Rincon Fault. Four miles upriver from the Bridge, the Rincon Trail climbs up out of the Canyon onto an extensive

basalt flow, 800 to 1,000 feet above the River. From this basalt plateau, one can look down into the rugged granite gorge of the Kern River. The trail enters the Wilderness at the Forks of the Kern.

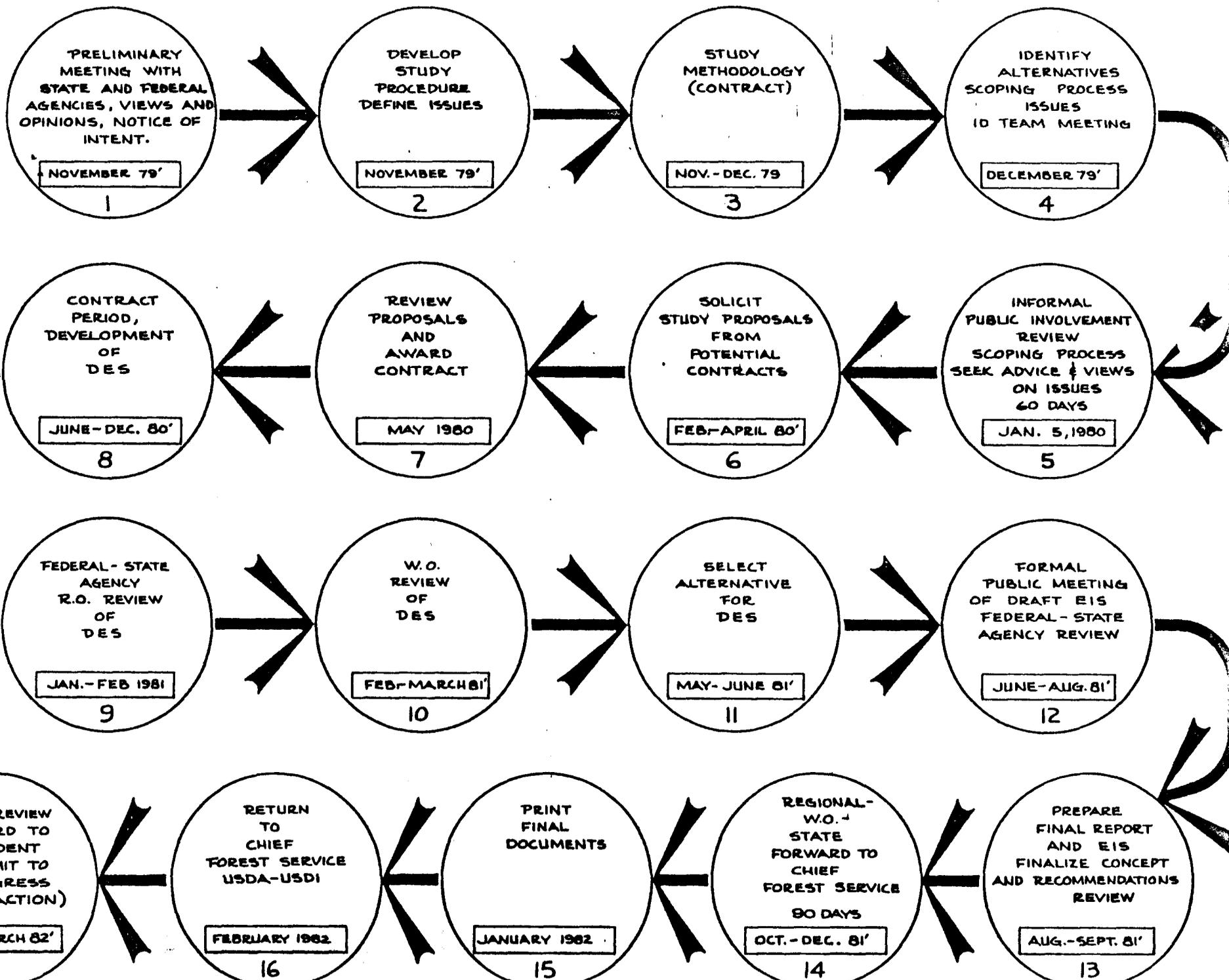
Geologically, the Kern River travels through deep granite canyons, basalt flows, gabbro, slates, marbles, and limestones. From Junction Meadow to the Kern Canyon Ranger Station in Sequoia National Park is a magnificent U-shaped valley that was formed during the Pleistocene. It is in this region of the Kern Canyon that the most southern glaciation occurs in the Sierra Nevada. Also, midway in this portion of the River occurs the Kern Hot Springs, the only hot springs along the entire Study area. Just downstream from the beautiful U-shaped valley the granitic walls disappear and rugged slopes of gabbro appear. From the Park boundary south into the Golden Trout Wilderness, the Kern River flows slowly into the Kern Lakes region which is an important spawning area for several species of trout. The greatest region comprised of gabbro occurs below the Kern Lakes between Hole-in-the-Ground and Soda Flat. It is in this extremely rugged section of the river where associated conifers are also found along the Kern River in this region: sugar pine (Pinus lambertiana), ponderosa pine (Pinus ponderosa), white fir (Abies concolor), incense-cedar (Calocedrus decurrens), and western juniper (Juniperus occidentalis australis). From Kern Flat southward to Lake Isabella pinyon pine (Pinus monophylla), and digger pine (Pinus sabiniana) become dominant on the drier sites. From the Johnsondale Bridge south, most of the yellow pine forest has been replaced by the digger pine woodland which is primarily digger pine. Pinyon pine and California juniper (Juniperus californica) are also found in the digger pine woodland along this section of the Kern River.

FY-1980 10/1/79 - 9/30/80

FY-1981 10/1/80 - 9/30/81

1ST QTR.			2ND QTR.			3RD QTR.			4TH QTR.			1ST QTR.			2ND QTR.			REMARKS
O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	
																		FOREST SERVICE - PARK SERVICE - STATE AGREE ON PROCEDURE. FILE NOTICE OF INTENT.
																		SCOPE CRITICAL ISSUES
																		PUBLIC MEETING & RESPONSE TIME
																		SEQUOIA NF SOLICITS STUDY PROPOSALS FROM POTENTIAL CONTRACT.
																		REVIEW PROPOSALS. AWARD CONTRACT.
																		CONTRACT PERIOD. PROVIDE FOR FS - NPS REVIEWS AND DECISION POINTS. CONTRACTOR REVIEW BASED ON PRE-DRAFT REVIEW.
																		REGIONAL OFFICES AND STATE REVIEW OF DRAFT EIS AND RECOMMENDATION.
																		WO'S REVIEW DRAFT EIS AND RECOMMENDATION.
																		CONTRACTOR SUBMIT FINAL PRODUCT. FS PRINT DRAFT STUDY AND EIS.
																		TRANSMIT DRAFT EIS TO USDA-USDI.
																		PUBLIC REVIEW AND REVIEW BY WATER RESOURCES COUNCIL AND OTHER AGENCIES.
																		SEQUOIA NF WRITES FINAL E AND RECOMMENDATION BASED ON PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT & COMMENT.
																		REGIONAL - WASHINGTON OFFICES AND STATE REVIEW OF FINAL.
																		PRINT FINAL DOCUMENTS.
																		USDA-USDI REVIEW FINAL.
																		OMB REVIEW FINAL.
																		TRANSMIT TO CONGRESS.

NORTH FORK KERN RIVER - SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST STUDY SCHEDULE



NORTH FORK KERN RIVER STUDY PROCEDURE