Salmon Creek: Eligible Wild and Scenic River

Salmon Creek Falls tumbling over the edge of the ecologically unique Kern Plateau. (Photo courtesy of Summitpost.com)

June 12, 2017
Steve Evans, California Wilderness Coalition
Phone: (916) 708-3155, Email: sevans@calwild.org

Salmon Creek rises from the heart of the ecologically unique Kern Plateau on public lands in the Sequoia National Forest. From its source springs high on the slopes of Sirretta Peak, Salmon Creek flows through diverse forests, rich meadows, and rugged bedrock gorges. The creek drops more than 5,500 feet in elevation over its nearly 12-mile length, eventually tumbling over the highest waterfall south of Sequoia National Park to its confluence with the North Fork Kern River. Most of the stream is free flowing and possesses outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, and ecological values. Because of these attributes, conservationists consider Salmon Creek to be eligible for National Wild and Scenic River protection.

Joe Fontaine has been working to protect the wild places of the Kern Plateau and the Sequoia Forest for 60 years. He literally wrote the book on the Kern Plateau (*The Kern Plateau and Other Gems of the Southern Sierra*, 2009), and is the definitive expert on this wild landscape. Fontaine first started visiting the Kern Plateau in the 1950s by hiking up Salmon Creek from the North Fork Kern River to fish for golden trout. On some trips, he would backpack all the way to Big Meadow. According to Joe, "As strenuous as the hike was, the scenery was so inspiring, I never passed up the chance to hike there."

Fontaine believes that Salmon Creek meets the required characteristics of Wild and Scenic River, from its source near Sirretta Peak, flowing through Big Meadow and Horse Meadow, and then rumbling through the rocky gorge from which it tumbles over the edge of Plateau at Salmon Creek Falls. According to Mr. Fontaine, "There is no other stream on the Kern Plateau or elsewhere in the Sequoia National Forest with all those attributes in one watershed."

The Forest Service is required to assess rivers and streams for their Wild and Scenic River eligibility in the land and resources planning process. Initial screening conducted by the Forest Service in 1991-92 determined Salmon Creek to be ineligible due to a supposed lack of outstandingly remarkable values. This determination was repeated in the 2016 Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Revision of the Inyo, Sequoia, and Sierra National Forests Land Management Plans, Volume 2 Appendices (Forest Service, May 2016). However, conservationists believe that the assessment failed to consider relatively new information concerning the outstanding ecological values of Salmon Creek, as well as its well-known recreation and scenic values.

Conservationists believe that an 11.1-mile section of Salmon Creek meets the two basic criteria for Wild and Scenic eligibility. The creek is free flowing from its source on Sirretta Peak to SCE's Kern River 3 Hydroelectric Project diversion about ½ mile upstream of the creek's confluence with the North Fork Kern River. Using the Kern Plateau, Sequoia National Forest, and Sierra Nevada Province as the regions of comparison, Salmon Creek possesses outstanding remarkable scenic, recreation, and ecological values.

OUTSTANDINGLY REMARKABLE VALUES

Ecological –

There are no defined criteria for determining an outstandingly remarkable ecological value in agency guidelines. This report uses the general definition of an outstandingly remarkable value provided in the 1982 guidelines and Forest Service Handbook – a "river-related value that is unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant when compared to similar values from other rivers at a regional or national scale."

Salmon Creek is a major stream that rises from the heart of the ecologically unique Kern Plateau. The Kern Plateau is home to numerous plants and animals with limited endemic distribution. The plateau is a hot spot for endemic species because it is an ecological island that

provided favorable habitat through the last Ice Age, during which time relicts were preserved and specializations evolved.[1] It remains an ecological island today due to higher elevations to the north and lower elevations to the east, south, and west, which result in significantly different precipitation and vegetation patterns that isolate the area.

Although there are larger and longer streams draining the plateau, Salmon Creek experiences perhaps the greatest range of elevation change than any other stream on the plateau, beginning at 9,000 feet elevation and dropping more than a mile to its confluence with the North Fork Kern River below 3,500 feet elevation. Along the way, the creek flows through four life zones (sub-alpine, upper montane, lower montane, and foothill woodland/chaparral), which support diverse ecosystems and equally diverse plant and animal species.

The unique ecology of the Kern Plateau is demonstrated by the unusual occurrence of the Pacific fisher. Models show little suitable habitat on the Plateau for this sensitive forest carnivore but sightings have been numerous and persistent. The Kern Plateau is ecologically distinct from other fisher habitat areas, with less precipitation, gentler and less incised terrain, and perhaps different vegetation composition and structure.[2] The Plateau encompasses the only core habitat area for Pacific fisher not on the west slope of the Sierra Nevada, and its location on the Kern Plateau confirms unique environmental conditions compared to the west-slope cores.[3] Salmon Creek flows through the southern portion of this core habitat for Pacific fisher.

Salmon Creek is the best representative example of the ecological diversity of the streams draining the plateau. The stream's source is within the Twisselmann Botanical Area. Altogether, six plant associations are represented in the Botanical Area. These plant associations form a unique mosaic of vegetation in the southern Sierra Nevada. The plant associations include foxtail pine forest, subalpine/mixed conifer forest, red fir forest, rock outcrop, montane chaparral, and mountain meadow-streambank. The area represents the southern-most limit of both the foxtail pine and limber pine.

In addition to the unique associations of conifers, several plants in the Botanical Area constitute phytogeographical records. More than 70 species of plants have been identified in this area and its mountain meadows may contain a variety of unidentified additional species.[4] The Botanical Area provides a unique and high value special resource that contributes to the wilderness character of the Woodpecker roadless area (Domeland West addition) and Salmon Creek through which it flows.[5]

[1] A Natural History of California (2nd Edition) by Allan A. Schoenherr, UC Press July 2017, pgs. 168-169
[2] Baseline Evaluation of Fisher Habitat and Population Status in the Southern Sierra Nevada, by Wayne Spencer et al, Region 5 USDA Forest Service, December 2007.
[3] Southern Sierra Nevada Fisher Conservation Strategy, by Wayne Spencer at al, Fisher Interagency Leadership Team, Feb. 2016.
[4] Sequoia National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, Chapter 7, Volume 1 FEIS Appendix H, Evaluation of the Twisselmann Botanical Area, Forest Service 1988.
[5] Inyo, Sequoia, Sierra National Forests Land Management Plans Revision DEIS, Vol. 2, Appendix B, May 2016, polygon 1394.

Salmon Creek flows through a variety of habitats, including meadows, that support a high diversity of butterfly species. The mountainous region of Kern and Tulare Counties provides the richest area for butterflies, many of which occur only in California and some only in this region. Many butterfly species reach the southern limits of their range on the plateau. Butterfly counts have been as high as seventy species identified in a day along the Sherman Pass Road. The meadow systems along Salmon Creek provide rich habitat for butterflies, with Big Meadow supporting 55 or more species.[6]

Big Meadow was formed by a prehistoric blockage of Salmon Creek. Located at 8,000 feet in elevation, this large meadow is surrounded by forest and high granite peaks. Big Meadow offers habitats for an exceptional number of plant species. More than 283 species of plants have been identified in Big Meadow and its immediate borders. This list includes not only common plants such as lodgepole pine, but also representatives of subalpine and even alpine flora.[7]

Downstream of Big and Horse Meadows, Salmon Creek enters the Cannell Peak roadless area, which the Forest Service describes as "a complex unit with an incredible diversity of plants and animals related to elevation and large open meadows that provide prime habitat for several species of salamanders and the mountain yellow-legged frog."[8] It's likely that the segment of lower Salmon Creek that flows through the Cannell Peak area shares these ecological attributes.

Collectively, these resources constitute an outstandingly remarkable ecological value within the context of the Kern Plateau, Sequoia National Forest, and the Sierra Nevada province.

Scenery –

Forest Service criteria for identifying outstandingly remarkable scenic values include notable or exemplary visual features or attractions, which may encompass landforms, vegetation, water, color, and related factors. Seasonal variations in vegetation, scale of cultural modifications, and the length of time negative intrusions are viewed, may also be considered. Scenery and visual attractions may be highly diverse over different parts of the river or river segment and scenic features need only occupy a small portion of a river corridor.

Forest Service documents indicate that the entire Salmon Creek corridor has distinctive Variety Class A scenery. Attractiveness of the corridor is enhanced by the diversity of features that include jagged rock outcrops and peaks, bedrock gorges with cascades and pools, Salmon Creek Falls, and Big Meadow.[9] The outstanding scenery of Salmon Creek changes every few miles, from diverse sub-alpine forests, to lush meadows of varying sizes, granite bedrock gorges, and

[6] Lepidoptera of North America. 3.4 Butterflies of Kern and Tulare Counties, California (Revised), by Ken Davenport, C.P. Gillette Museum of Arthropod Diversity, Colorado State University, Jan. 25, 2014.
[7] The Kern Plateau and Other Gems of the Southern Sierra, by Joseph B. Fontaine, 2009.
[8] Ibid. 5
[9] Eligibility Analysis – Field Verification, Cannell Meadow Ranger District, Cheryl Bauer, April 12, 1993.

numerous large and small cascades and waterfalls. The creek flows through Big Meadow, one of the largest wet meadows in the southern Sierra Nevada. Big Meadow is surrounded by granite ridges, high steep rock outcrops, and lush forests that give the meadow an unusually dramatic setting.[10]

Salmon Creek departs the Kern Plateau in a spectacular display over the 450-foot-high Salmon Creek Falls – the highest water fall in the southern Sierra south of Sequoia National Park.[11] The falls are one of the great natural features of the southern Sierra.[12] Forest visitors are apprised of the scenic view of Salmon Creek Falls by a sign on the Kern River Highway. Before tumbling over the falls, Salmon Creek cascades through a series of scenic "teacups" carved into the bedrock granite.

The diverse scenery of Salmon Creek is significantly different from the scenery found along existing and generally much larger Wild and Scenic Rivers in the Sierra Nevada, including the North and South Forks of the Kern River and the Kings River to the north. This makes the scenery of Salmon Creek outstandingly remarkable within the context of the Kern Plateau, Sequoia National Forest, and the Sierra Nevada Province.

Recreation –

Forest Service criteria for identifying outstandingly remarkable recreation values include high quality recreational opportunities that attract, or have the potential to attract, visitors from throughout or beyond the region of comparison. Recreational opportunities are unique or rare within the region. River-related recreational opportunities include, but are not limited to, sightseeing, interpretation, wildlife observation, camping, photography, hiking, fishing, hunting, and boating. The river may provide settings for national or regional use or competitive events.

Recreation opportunities along Salmon Creek are as diverse as its scenery and ecological values. Trails parallel or are close to much of the creek, and the well-maintained road system provides easy access to trailheads, developed campgrounds, and dispersed camping areas found along the stream. The trail system also provides access to the primitive recreation opportunities found in two roadless areas.

The Cannell Meadow National Recreation Trail (3E32) and the Sirretta Peak Trail (34E12) provide access to the upper portion of the creek in the Woodpecker roadless area (aka Domeland West addition). The Cannell Meadow NRT is open to hikers, motorcycles, mountain bikes, and equestrians. Slated for closure to motorcycles under the Mediated Settlement Agreement, the Sirretta Peak Trail provides access to the Twisselmann Botanical Area, which attracts botanists from outside the region. The trail also accesses Sirretta Peak, which claims a commanding spot on the Kern Plateau and one of the best viewpoints in the entire southern

[10] The Kern Plateau and Other Gems of the Southern Sierra, by Joseph B. Fontaine, 2009.
[11] WorldWaterfallDataBase.com; Self Propelled in the Southern Sierra, by J.C. Jenkins, Wilderness Press, 1984.
[12] http://kernriversierra.com/hike/rincon_trail.html

Sierra.[13] Outstanding views of Big Meadow and the nearby granite domes of the Domeland Wilderness are important features of this trail.[14] Because it flows through a roadless area, this segment of Salmon Creek provides opportunities for solitude and for primitive and unconfined recreation.[15]

The Cannell Meadow NRT follows Salmon Creek downstream past dispersed camping areas favored by equestrians and other, and skirts around scenic Big Meadow. Fishing Salmon Creek in and around Big Meadow for non-native brown trout attracts visitors from outside the region.[16] The Salmon Creek Trail (33E36) begins on Road 22S12 on the edge of Big Meadow. The trail initially bypasses the rugged granite gorge through which Salmon Creek flows just downstream of Big Meadow, but then returns to and crosses the creek and proceeds downstream through dense forest and stringer meadows. The trail continues past the old KV Camp, Horse Meadow Campground, and through bucolic Horse Meadow, which in season is spangled with wildflowers. Much of this segment of Salmon Creek could be accessible to the physically challenged at many locations, and is ideal for providing improved ADA access. The old KV Camp could be an excellent future environmental education center or field station.

A rough anglers trail follows Salmon Creek immediately downstream of Horse Meadow. This route requires some scrambling on granite slabs along the creek, but it eventually meets up with the rebuilt Salmon Creek Falls Trail (also 33E36) at its trailhead at the end of Road 23S08. This well-built trail starts high up on the canyon slope and enters the Cannell Peak roadless area, before dropping down to a crossing of Salmon Creek.

As hikers proceed downstream from the crossing, the creek flows through lushly vegetated forest and granite slides and pools, and then dramatically tumbles over the edge of the Kern Plateau over a series of breathtaking waterfalls, including the highest in the southern Sierra. Although views of Salmon Creek Falls are limited from the trail, those with strong scrambling and rock climbing skills can climb the granite hill to the north of the creek to view the upper falls. Anglers and swimmers may scramble down to the left to the scenic Salmon Creek teacups. Flows are highest in the spring, but the low summer flows are perfect for lounging in the small "teacup" pools.[17]

This segment of Salmon Creek clearly attracts visitors from beyond the region. Ann Marie Brown, author of *California Waterfalls* (Foghorn Press, 2000) describes the Salmon Creek Trail to Salmon Falls as "a stellar walk through lodgepole pines and white fir, with a chance for fishing, skinny-dipping, and getting close to the lip of a big waterfall—my idea of a perfect day-trip or an easy one-night backpacking jaunt in early summer."

[13] http://kernriversierra.com/hike/Sirretta_trail.html
[14] California Hiking, by Tom Stienstra and Ann Marie Brown, Foghorn Press, 1997.
[15] Ibid. 5.
[16] http://www.bakersfield.com/news/steve-merlo-stealth-a-key-to-fishing-for-trout-in/article_6a903618-6679-554b-82e0-364b8537c82d.htmll
[17] http://kernriversierra.com/hike/Salmon_Creek_Falls_hike.html

Modernhiker.com, which primarily focuses on trails throughout southern California, features the hike to lower Salmon Creek Falls. It describes the route to the lower falls as "A short and strenuous little-known trip to an incredible secluded canyon waterfall in the southern Sequoia National Forest, just north of Kernville…you get to see an unbelievable canyon with a majestic waterfall (and sometimes TWO waterfalls in wet years!) in a secluded grove…A surprising and wonderful hike!"[18]

The lower segment of Salmon Creek is framed by dramatic rock formations that define the edge of the Kern Plateau. Below the falls, the creek is accessible via SCE's KR3 aqueduct service road and the Rincon Trail. Again, direct access to the Salmon Creek Falls is limited but for those willing to do some rock scrambling, some breathtaking views are available. This segment of Salmon Creek and the surrounding area is a popular destination for rock climbers. It is also the site of the 2002 California Eco-Challenge Finals, which required a 500-foot rappel near the waterfall and finding a cross-country route all the way down to the North Fork.[19]

Visitors using the Rincon Trail may enjoy a long-distance view of Salmon Creek Falls and access the good fishing and camping prospects found along lower Salmon Creek downstream of the falls.[20] The multi-use Rincon Trail, which crosses Salmon Creek, is unique because it follows the Rincon Fault, which defines the entire east slope of the North Fork Kern canyon.[21]

Salmon Creek clearly possesses outstandingly remarkable recreation values within the context of the Kern Plateau, Sequoia National Forest, and the Sierra Nevada Province. As documented by numerous web sites and books, these outstanding recreation values attract visitors from outside the region.

See Table 1 summarizing the outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) of Salmon Creek, on page 12.

SEGMENTS AND CLASSIFICATION

Salmon Creek comprises three distinct segments based on the level of current development and resource management.

Segment 1: This 1.7-mile segment begins at the creek's source springs at about 9,000 feet elevation high on the south slope of Sirretta Peak and ends 300 feet north of the Cannell Meadow National Recreation Trail (NRT) trailhead, approximately .25-miles upstream of the 23S07 road crossing.

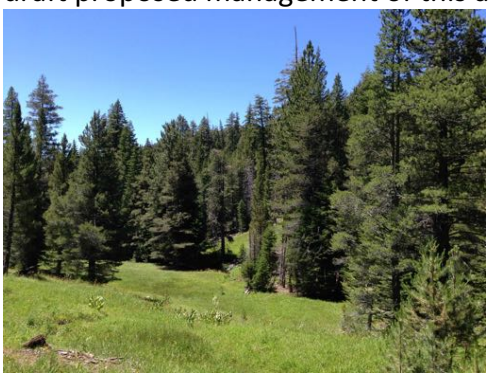
The dominant feature of this segment is Sirretta Peak. No roads exist along this segment nor are there any visible signs of development other than the Sirretta Peak Trail (34E12) and the

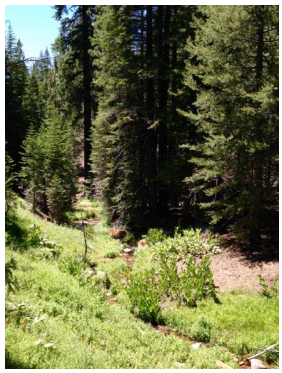
[18] https://modernhiker.com/hike/hiking-salmon-creek-falls-in-sequoia-national-forest
[19] http://kernriversierra.com/canyoneering.html#salmon
[20] Ibid. 14.
[21] Ibid. 19

Cannell Meadow NRT, which are only occasionally visible from the stream's edge. The Forest Service agreed to close the Sirretta Peak Trail to motorized (motorcycle) use as part of the Mediated Settlement Agreement. The Sirretta Peak Trail currently exhibits little or no evidence of motorcycle use. Most of Segment 1 is in the Woodpecker Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) and adjacent roadless lands more recently inventoried by the Forest Service.[22] The Cannell Meadow NRT, a multi-use trail open to motorcycles and mountain bikes, is cherry-stemmed under the RACR and in the more recent roadless inventory.

Most of Segment 1 is currently managed for general dispersed recreation with a co-emphasis on timber management, a Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) overlay of semi-primitive non-motorized, and a visual quality objective of partial retention. This management has been amended to protect the ecological values of the Twisselmann Botanical Area and road construction is prohibited in this area under the Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR).[23] The May 2016 draft Sequoia Forest Plan revision proposes to continue semi-primitive non-motorized management with a high scenic integrity objective for the upper portion of this segment (roughly parallel to the Sirretta Peak Trail) and roaded natural management with a high scenic integrity objective in the lower portion (roughly parallel to the Cannell Meadow NRT). Alternative C of the draft plan revision includes most of segment 1 as recommended wilderness.[24]

Tentative Classification – Segment 1 is proposed for Wild classification. The segment meets all Wild classification criteria (free of impoundment, essentially primitive and inaccessible except by trail, little or no evidence of current or past logging, and the stream likely meets or exceeds federal and state water quality standards). Motorized trails are permissible in Wild segments, particularly those that do not heavily invade the river corridor. Motorized use of the Cannell Meadow NRT may continue under Wild classification and this use is consistent with current and draft proposed management of this area.





Left Picture: Salmon Creek's source spring is in this high meadow in the Twisselmann Botanical Area. Middle Picture: Sirretta Peak Trail. Right Picture: Salmon Creek's segment 1 is small but nevertheless, the creek was still flowing in the driest year of a 5-year drought.

[22] RARE II, U.S. Forest Service, 1977, RA # 5206; Inyo, Sequoia, Sierra National Forests Land Management Plans Revision DEIS, Vol. 2, Appendix B, May 2016, polygon 1394.
[23] Sequoia National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and FEIS, U.S. Forest Service, March 1988; Roadless Area Conservation Rule, U.S. Forest Service, 2001
[24] Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Sequoia National Forest and DEIS for Revision of the Inyo, Sequoia, and Sierra National Forests Land Management Plans, Vol. 2, Appendix B, U.S. Forest Service, May 2016

Segment 2: This 4.1-mile segment begins 300 feet north of the Cannell Meadow NRT trailhead approximately .25-miles upstream of the 23S07 road crossing and ends at the western edge of Horse Meadow.

The primary features of this segment include Big Meadow and Horse Meadow, and the rugged granite gorge downstream of the Road 22S12 crossing. The 23S07 and 22S12 roads cross the creek over culverts upstream and downstream of where this segment flows through Big Meadow. A short spur road parallels the creek from the 23S07 road to the Cannell Meadow NRT trailhead and the land along this section of the creek accommodates dispersed camping by equestrians and others. Big Meadow is grazed under a Forest Service permit and access roads, fences, and structures associated with grazing management are nearby and visible. A large earthen embankment that holds the 22S12 culvert in place may act as an unintended and temporary impoundment of Salmon Creek during peak run-off. The Salmon Creek Trail (33E26) parallels part of the creek between the Road 23S13 crossing and Horse Meadow Campground. The old KV Camp is located near this segment but is visually screened from the creek. Horse Meadow Campground is located directly on the creek and vacation cabins on private inholdings in and around Horse Meadow are visible in places from the streambank.

Segment 2 is currently managed for general dispersed recreation with a co-emphasis on timber management, a ROS overlay of roaded natural, and a visual quality objective of partial retention. The area immediately adjacent to the Horse Meadow Campground is allocated to developed recreation. The revised draft plan proposes to continue roaded natural management with a high scenic integrity objective.

Left Picture: Joe Fontaine in Big Meadow – the high peak to the left is Sirretta Peak and the drainage to the right of Sirretta is upper Salmon Creek. Middle Picture: Salmon Creek at the western edge of Horse Meadow. Right Picture: Horse Meadow Campground sign, emblematic of this segment's outstanding recreational value.

Tentative Classification – Segment 2 is proposed for Recreational classification, primarily in recognition of nearby roads and two culverted road crossings (one quite large that may act as an unintentional impoundment), as well as with grazing improvements and management in Big Meadow. Downstream of Big Meadow, two road crossings, the nearby presence of the old KV Camp and Horse Meadow Campground, and summer cabins on the private inholding encompassing part of Horse Meadow also contribute to this segment's Recreational classification. The segment meets all Recreational classification criteria (some evidence of impoundment or diversion but generally natural and riverine in appearance, some substantial

evidence of human activity, including past and ongoing evidence of logging and grazing management, readily accessible by road).

Segment 3: This 5.3-mile segment begins at the west edge of Horse Meadow to .25 miles upstream of SCE's KR3 diversion and aqueduct access road.

The primary features of this segment include the rugged bedrock canyon through which the creek flows and numerous cascades and waterfalls, including the 450-foot high Salmon Creek Falls. The lower portion of this segment is framed by dramatic rock formations that define the edge of the Kern Plateau. Most of this segment flows through the Cannell Peak roadless area and more recently inventoried adjacent roadless lands.

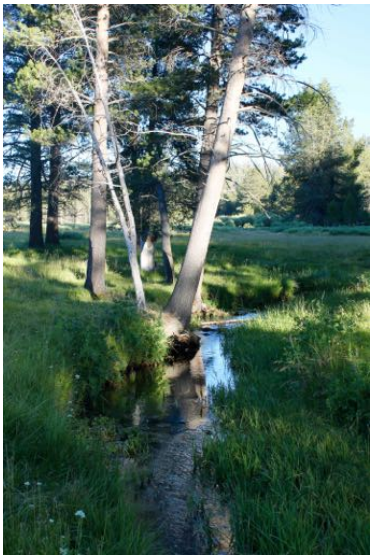
Most of Segment 3 is currently managed for general dispersed recreation, wildlife/dispersed recreation, and grazing, with a co-emphasis on timber management, a ROS overlay of roaded natural and semi-primitive motorized, and a visual quality objective of partial retention. Within the Cannell Peak roadless area, this management has been amended by the RACR to prohibit road construction. The draft Sequoia Plan revision allocates this segment to semi-primitive motorized management with a high scenic integrity objective. Most of the Cannell Peak roadless area is recommended for wilderness protection under Alternative C of the draft revised plan.

Left Picture: Salmon Creek flows through a bedrock gorge downstream of Horse Meadow. Middle Picture: The beautiful Salmon Creek "teacups" upstream of Salmon Creek Falls. Right Picture: Middle Salmon Creek Falls. (Middle and right pictures courtesy of KernRiverSierra.com).

Tentative Classification – Segment 3 is proposed for Wild classification, primarily in recognition that much of this segment flows through the Cannell Peak roadless area and more recently inventoried adjacent roadless lands. The only motorized trail in this segment is the Rincon Trail, which crosses but does not parallel Salmon Creek. Motorized trails are permissible in Wild segments, particularly when they do not heavily invade the river corridor. This segment meets the basic criteria for Wild Rivers, including essentially primitive with little or no evidence of human activities, little or no evidence of past or ongoing timber harvest, and generally inaccessible except by trail. Portions of the 23S08 road leading to the Salmon Falls Trailhead are within ¼ mile of the creek, but the road is located sufficiently high up on the canyon slope to be invisible from the creek and for motorized used to occur unheard. The Wild River corridor boundary may be easily adjusted to exclude this road.

CONCLUSION

Salmon Creek from its source on Sirretta Peak to point upstream of SCE's KR3 diversion is free flowing. We believe that Salmon Creek possesses outstandingly remarkable ecological scenic, and recreation values. This 11.1-mile section of Salmon Creek should be determined eligible for Wild and Scenic River protection in the upcoming Sequoia National Forest draft supplemental plan revision scheduled to be released for public review in early 2018.



Clockwise from top left: Salmon Creek below Horse Meadow. Cannell Meadow Trailhead sign 300 feet downstream of the end of segment 1. Salmon Creek in Horse Meadow. Bigelow's sneezeweed in a small meadow along the Sirretta Trail.

About the author: Steven L. Evans is a consultant on public lands and river conservation issues for CalWild. He has more than 40 years of professional and volunteer experience protecting and conserving public lands, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Wilderness.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF SALMON CREEK'S OUTSTANDINGLY REMARKABLE VALUES (ORVs)

ECOLOGICAL ORVs	SCENIC ORVs	RECREATION ORVs
1. Located in the Kern Plateau "ecological island" and is the best example of ecologically diverse Plateau streams. 2. Drops 5,500 feet in 12 miles, flowing through four life zones, with wide diversity of plants and animals, many with limited endemic distribution. 3. Flows through the eastern-most and ecologically distinct habitat for Pacific fisher. 4. Source located in Twisselmann Botanical Area, which supports unique association of conifers and plants, including the southern-most limit of foxtail and limber pine. 5. Flows through Big Meadow, which supports a high diversity of butterflies and an exceptional number of plant species. 6. Flows through the Woodpecker and Cannell Peak roadless areas, which support a high diversity of plant/animal diversity contributing to wilderness character of Wild segments. 	1. Entire stream corridor has distinctive variety class A scenery enhanced by diverse features. 2. Diverse scenery changes every few miles due to elevation changes, geographic features, and vegetation. 3. Big Meadow located in an unusually dramatic setting, including lush forests, granite ridges and rock outcrops. 4. Tumbles off the edge of the Kern Plateau over 450-foot high Salmon Creek Falls, the highest waterfall south of Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park. 5. Many smaller waterfalls, cataracts, and eroded bedrock pools (teacups). 	1. Offers diverse recreational opportunities, including hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, motorbike riding, equestrian use, birdwatching, botanizing, butterfly collecting, fishing, hunting, developed camping at Horse Meadow Campground, several dispersed camping sites, and wilderness recreation. 2. Stream segment between Big Meadow and Horse Meadow provides rare backcountry opportunity for future developed ADA access. 3. The upper Salmon Creek Falls Trail and Salmon Creek Falls are featured in *California Waterfalls*, attracting visitors from outside the region. 4. *Modernhiker.com*, a southern California hiking blog, features the hike to lower Salmon Creek Falls, attracting visitors from outside the region. 5. Dramatic rock formations along lower Salmon Creek offer popular rock climbing destinations. 6. Lower Salmon Creek was the site of the 2002 California Ecological Challenge Finals (organized competitive event). 7. Accessed by a variety of trails, including the Sirretta Trail, Cannell Meadow National Recreation Trail, Salmon Creek Trail, Salmon Creek Falls Trail, and Rincon Trail.

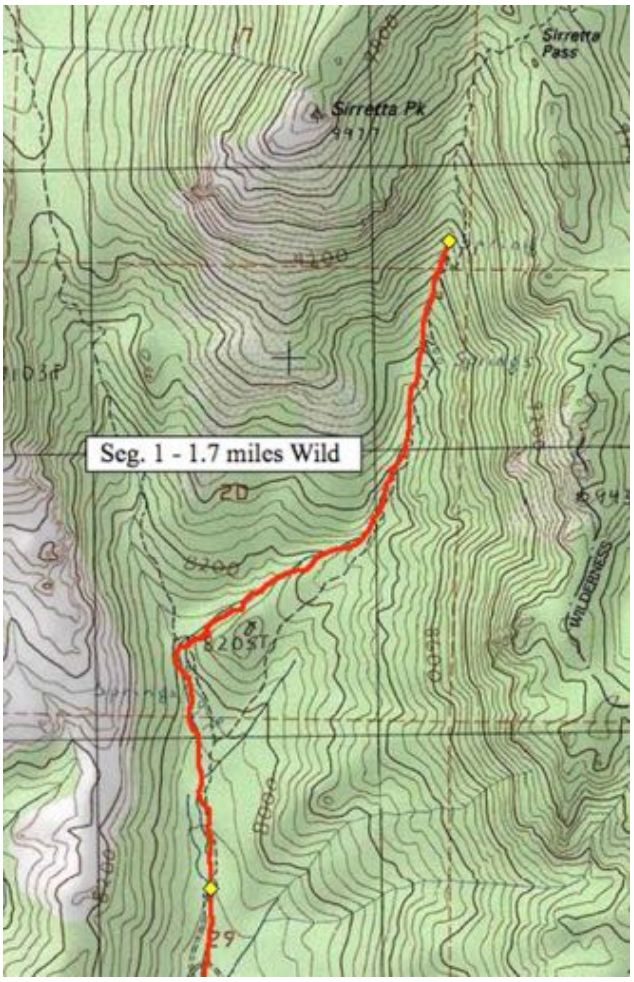
Left Picture: Leopard lily along Salmon Creek in Horse Meadow. Middle Picture: Upper Salmon Creek Falls (courtesy of KernRiverSierra.com). Right Picture: Salmon Creek Falls Trailhead sign.

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF SALMON CREEK SEGMENTS AND TENTATIVE CLASSIFICATION

SEGMENT	WILD	RECREATIONAL
Segment 1: The 1.7-mile segment from the creek's source springs at about 9,000 feet elevation on the south slope of Sirretta Peak to 300 feet north of the Cannell Meadow National Recreation Trail (NRT) trailhead, approximately .25-miles upstream of the 23S07 road crossing.	➢ Free of impoundment. ➢ Essentially primitive with little or no evidence of past or ongoing timber harvest. ➢ Generally inaccessible except by trail. ➢ No roads (mostly in a roadless area). ➢ Likely meets Clean Water Act standards.	
Segment 2: The 4.1-mile segment from 300 feet north of the Cannell Meadow NRT trailhead approximately .25-miles upstream of the 23S07 road crossing to the western edge of Horse Meadow.		➢ Some existing impoundment (Road 22S12 culvert). ➢ Some development and occasional substantial evidence of human activity, including parallel roads and road crossings, culverts, cattle grazing, summer cabins, and a developed campground. ➢ Some evidence of past and ongoing timber harvest. ➢ Readily accessible by road.
Segment 3: The 5.3-mile segment from the western edge of Horse Meadow to .25 miles upstream of SCE's KR3 diversion and aqueduct road.	➢ Free of impoundment. ➢ Essentially primitive with little or no evidence of past or ongoing timber harvest. ➢ Generally inaccessible except by trail. ➢ No roads (mostly in a roadless area). ➢ Likely meets Clean Water Act standards.	

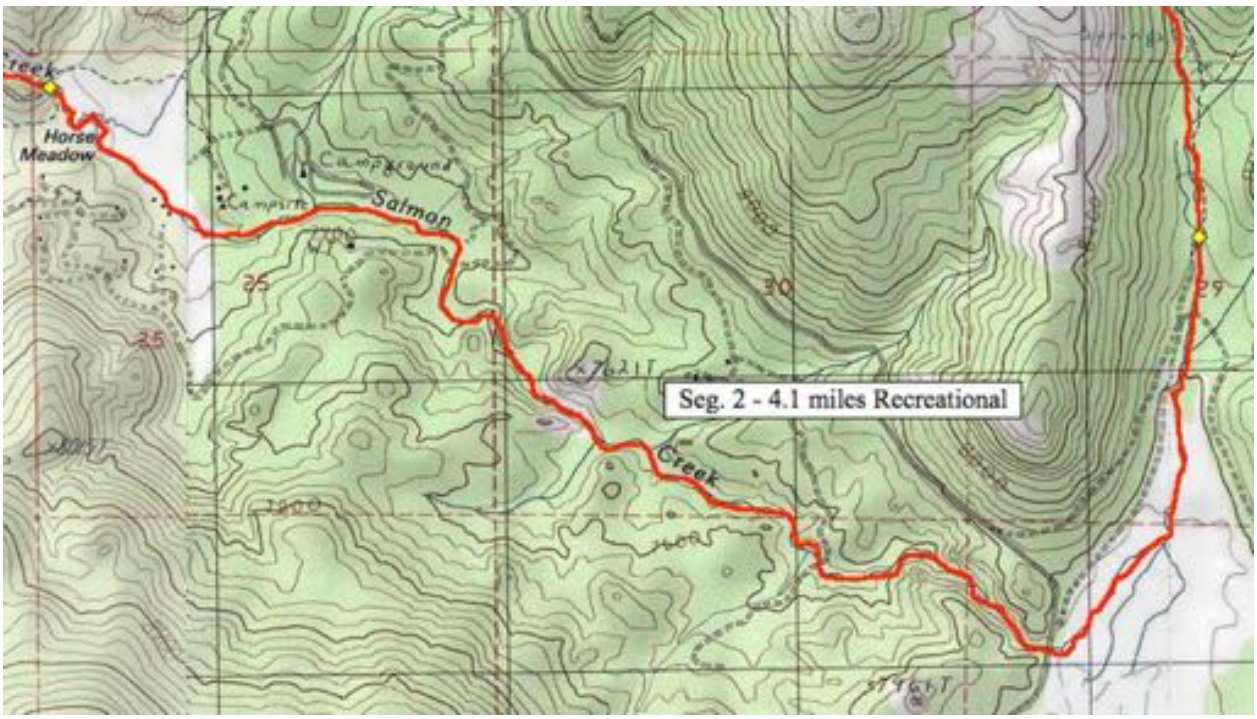
A distant Salmon Creek Falls (center) tumbles over the rim of the Kern Plateau (courtesy of Summitpost.com).

Map 1: Salmon Creek Segments 1-3 – Total Length: .



Map 2: Salmon Creek Segment 1 – 1.7 miles tentatively classified Wild.

Lower Salmon Creek Falls (Modernhiker.com).



Map 3: Salmon Creek Segment 2 – 4.1 miles tentatively classified Recreational.

Map 4: Salmon Creek Segment 3 – 5.3 miles tentatively classified Wild.

Salmon Creek Falls on belay (photo courtesy of Meetup.com/canyoneering events).