



# Public warned to stay out of Merced River below Lake McClure

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Merced County and the Merced Irrigation District are warning the public that beginning on Wednesday, July 8, the flow of the Merced River will significantly increase and the river should be avoided below Lake McClure. This includes all areas, including above and below the community of Snelling.

The Merced River is currently flowing at ranges of 200 to 450 cubic feet per second. In comparison, the river will increase to approximately 2,000 cubic feet per second beginning Wednesday. This is a dangerous, fast current and the river should be avoided. The river flow is expected to lower again after July 24<sup>th</sup>.

Merced County Sheriff Vern Warnke, whose office handles water rescues along the Merced River, expressed concern about the conditions and is encouraging everyone to stay out of the river and follow all precautionary signage in place at Hagaman and Henderson parks.

“The Merced River can be deceptively fast and has proven to be deadly on many tragic occasions,” Warnke said. “Please heed our warnings. Stay out of the river for your safety as well as the safety of our Sheriff’s Deputies that handle water rescues.”

MID Deputy General Manager Hicham ElTal shared the concerns expressed by Sheriff Warnke. “The river is going to be running high for the next couple weeks,” he said. “These flows are going to be much higher than what people have seen in recent weeks and everyone should stay away from it.”

Merced County Fire Chief Mike van Loben Sels, who also serves as the director of the Merced County Office of Emergency Services, said although the water may seem inviting when the weather starts to warm up, the river is extremely cold, swift and dangerous.

“When the weather heats up, people naturally gravitate toward water to cool off,” van Loben Sels said. “Although the river may seem inviting, it can be treacherous. Going for a swim is not worth losing your life.”

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