Water, in all its forms, is indeed the crowning glory of the Sierra. Whether in motion or at rest, the waters of the Sierra are a constant joy to the beholder. Above all, they are the Sierra’s greatest contribution to human welfare.

F. Farquhar, 1965. History of the Sierra Nevada
Contemplating the lace-like fabric of streams outspread over the mountains, we are reminded that everything is flowing somewhere, animals and so called lifeless rocks as well as water...

J. Muir, 1911, My First Summer in the Sierra
The long past of the Sierra Nevada

M. Hill, Geology of the Sierra Nevada, 1975
Yosemite Valley & the days of ice

before

after

M. Hill, Geology of the Sierra Nevada, 1975
Merced river headwaters are covered with snow in winter & spring.
Streamflow peaks during spring snowmelt
Peaks occur in late spring to early summer
Headwaters receive little summer precipitation & are largely snow free by late summer
Streams flow year round.
Merced river profile

- Merced river canyon
- Yosemite Valley
- Snelling
- Triple Divide
Streams enter the U-shaped Yosemite Valley from higher V-shaped canyons.
From Yosemite Valley the river drops to El Portal & the Merced River Canyon
Merced river canyon near Briceburg