



Fresno County Sheriff - Coroner's Office

Margaret Mims, Sheriff - Coroner

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News Release

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Sheriff Mims Reopens Kings River to Recreational Users

Effective immediately, the Fresno County Sheriff's Office is reopening the Kings River from Pine Flat Dam to the Tulare and Kings County lines.

In late May, Sheriff Margaret Mims issued an order to close the river in the best interest of public safety. Due to the large amount of melting snow in the Sierra, an extremely heavy amount of water flowed into and out of Pine Flat Dam. In late May, the dam was taking in water at a rate of 16,300 cubic feet per second (cfs) and the dam was pushing nearly 8,400 cfs into the Kings River. Now in mid-July, water is going into the dam at a rate of 6,500 cfs and out of the dam at 7,900 cfs.

This past weekend, members of the Sheriff's Boating Enforcement Unit (BEU) surveyed the Kings River between Reedley Beach and the Annadale Bridge. They noticed water levels have gone down, but also noted several safety hazards still exist for boaters, floaters and swimmers. There are downed trees, which create strainers. A strainer is where turbulent water flows through the tree. A person caught in a strainer can quickly find themselves pinned against the tree or even swept underneath it. It is extremely difficult to rescue yourself from a strainer and typically requires emergency help from trained rescue personnel. The area of Hwy. 180 and the Goodfellow Bridge is a popular access point, but is also one of the more dangerous spots on the river. Please use good, safe judgement when entering the water.

The Sheriff's Office is extremely pleased with how well the public cooperated with the rules set in place during the closure of the river. As a result, we did not receive any reports of injuries or deaths. Deputies issued two citations to boaters during the closure period. The Boating Enforcement Unit will continue to patrol the river to enforce the law and assist with any safety matters.

It is important for the public to understand that even though the Kings River is now back open for recreational use, dangers still exist. The temperature of the water is registering about 60°. Exposure to the cold water can cause hypothermia, which can quickly lead to exhaustion or unconsciousness. We ask that you take simple safety precautions while doing water activities such as: Wear a life jacket, stay close to shore if you're not an experienced swimmer and do not mix alcohol and swimming. Alcohol causes swimmers to fatigue faster than normal and can create dangerous situations. Also, please keep an eye on your children at all times. In less than a minute they can slip into the water and be put at risk for injury or death.