

South SWP Hydropower Relicensing, FERC Project No. 2426 Whitewater Study Field Reconnaissance Summary

Reconnaissance Details

When: Wednesday, January 9 – January 10, 2019. Both days – 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Where: Pyramid Reach of Piru Creek

Objective: Conduct field reconnaissance from below Frenchman’s Flat to Blue Point Campground, gather additional information on openness of creek channel, identify access and potential portage needs and observe flows of approximately 3cfs.

Attendees

Michael Barrientez (Stantec), Rocky Brown (Stantec), and Jonathan Cizmar (experienced boater)

Summary

Overview

Stantec staff accompanied experienced whitewater boater (Thursday, January 10), Jonathan Cizmar on a two-day hike in and out of the 15 mile long Pyramid Reach. On the first day the group started at Frenchman’s Flat Campground (top) and worked their way down stream, returning in late afternoon. During the second day the group started at Blue Point Campground (bottom) and worked their way up stream.

Wednesday, January 9, 2019

The group met at Frenchman’s Flat at 7:00am. The day began with a safety meeting to discuss potential hazards that may occur during the walkthrough. Some of the hazards are as follows;

- Wildlife
- Slips and trips
- Walking through water
- Vegetation (sharp branches, poison oak, weak branches, etc.)
- No cell phone service

Findings (upper part of 15-mile reach from Frenchman’s Flat into Ventura County)

Throughout this portion Piru Reach there is evidence of well-established campsites with fire pits. Recreationalist, probably anglers and others that enjoy hiking are walking through the canyon on shoreline and creek channel trails and setting up camps. Fishing seemed to be the most likely activity being done in the area. Evidence of fishing was found with old fishing rods and associated gear being tangled up in tree debris or up against the rock walls.

Evidence of recent high water was seen along the shorelines throughout the reach. These “rack lines” were found as a more or less continuous deposit of debris representing the mark as evidence of the general height reached by wave run up at recent high water. Most of these were found as loose vegetation tangled into the branches of trees and shrubs. The height of the rack lines varied throughout the reach. They provide strong evidence of how high the water once was in that specific area of the reach. It was difficult to state when these rack lines were formed, because they can last until the next high flow or they fall down over time.

Along the banks of the stream there was tangled and choked vegetation. Only about 10 percent of the reach had untangled vegetation or was fully open.

Poison oak was discovered at various points in the reach and should be noted for those that decide to walk or boat through the reach. During the reconnaissance most of the poison oak plants appeared dormant or dead.

In the upper part of the reach (down to about Fish Creek) it was observed there was a presence of large conglomerate rocks. It was difficult to tell whether these large rocks would be submerged with a flow of 200cfs. If the rocks are to be submerged during that flow, it will provide class 3- 4 rapids. There was some evidence that water flows once reached above these rocks. Pools were formed at the top and based on the deepness of the pool, water eroded the rock to deepen the pool. The possibility that rain filled the pool up and is evaporating slow, is also a possibility.

In many places it appeared higher boating flows would flow from canyon walls on one or both sides, and in these stretches of the reach seemed to provide calm straight class 2 boating even at or above 200cfs.

As expected there was not much evidence of a place where boaters can pull out and walk back to their vehicle at Frenchman’s once into the incised canyon stretches. Walking through the channel reach was found to be difficult without a 50-pound boat. Pullouts were hard to tell with the low cfs and unclear path of the water at 200cfs. The group agreed it would not be recommended to attempt to walk upstream with or without a boat at 200cfs or higher.

It was noted that once you commit to boating the reach you are in it to the end. Walking out would be a very difficult effort, and not likely safe.

It was noted that boaters entering this reach will not have cell reception other than at the Frenchman’s Flat parking lot or down at Piru Lake. Boaters could use satellite phones and should go as a group with an emergency plan well thought out.

There were clear signs of wildlife by droppings and footprints that were unidentified.

Rock cairns were found scattered throughout the reach as more evidence that their user made trails are frequented throughout the reach.

Thursday, January 10, 2019

The group began the second exploratory hike of Pyramid Reach going upstream from at the abandoned Blue Point Campground north of Lake Piru.

Findings

In the lower part of Pyramid Reach there were more steep canyon walls defining the creek canyon. Besides the steep canyon walls the reach was more open and had longer stretches of flatbeds cobble areas.

This portion of the reach also had thick vegetation in and around the channel.

The bottom portion of the reach did not have large rocks and would result in small smoother rapids probably.

Fallen trees in the channel were observed that could represent another hazard boaters would have to watch carefully for. At times the fallen trees were strung across the reach and it is unclear whether the water at 200cfs would clear the height of the laying logs.

Jonathan noted that the lower part of the reach is likely characterized as being class 2 level of difficulty. The limited eddies and no pullout sections could make the classification higher.

Blue Point Campground will be an ideal take out location, but vehicle access for public use is closed as the area has endangered Arroyo Toads that are being protected.

Action Items

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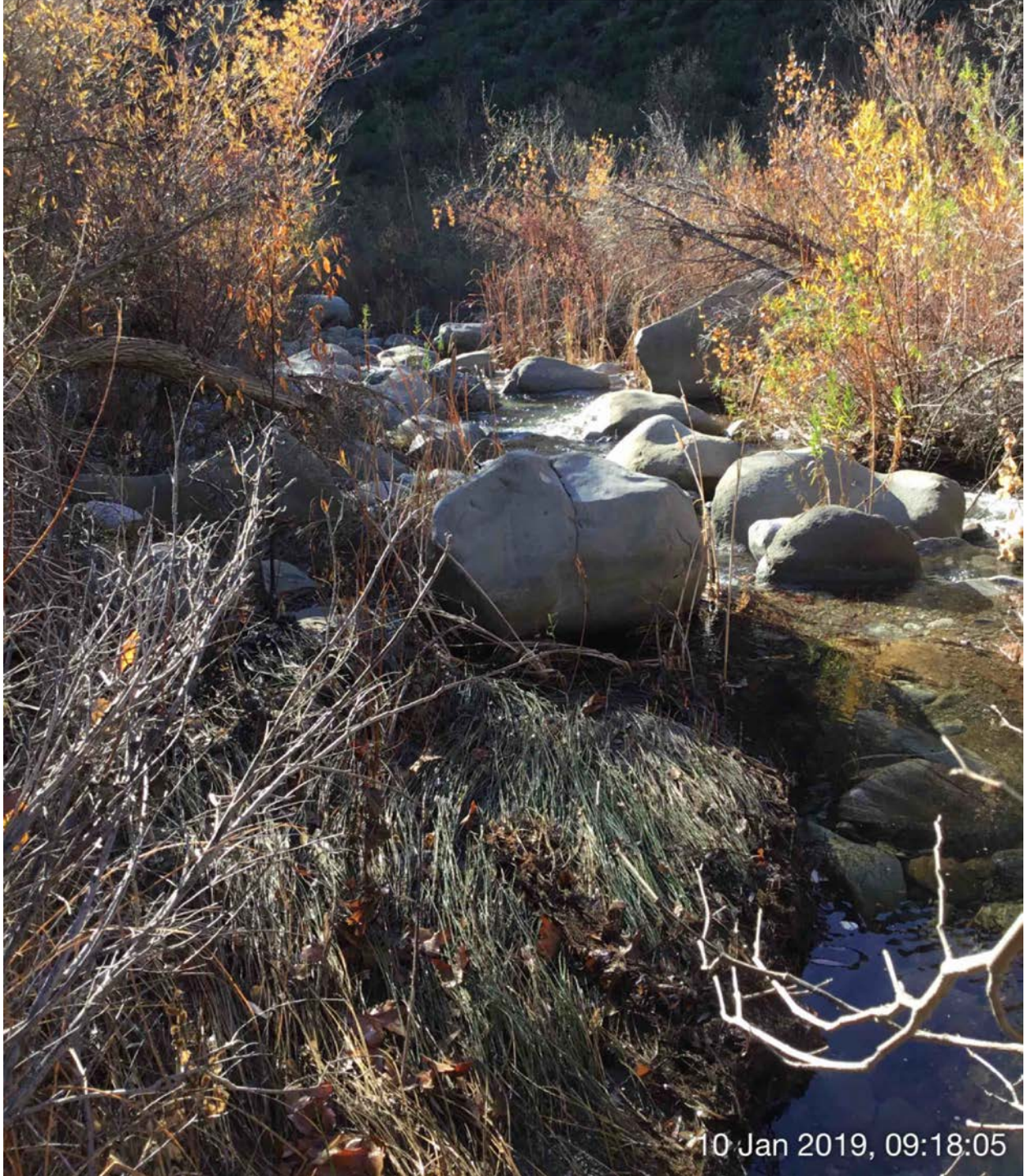
**Representative photos for 15 mile
section of Pyramid reach from
Frenchman's Flat to Blue Point
Campground from January 9 – 10,
2019**

☀ 76°E (T) ● 34°32'48"N, 118°46'18"W ±98.4ft ▲ 1197ft



Lower portion of Pyramid reach looking down stream. Slow moving water with steep canyon on one side and a wide sand bed on the other.

🌐 160°S (T) 📍 34°32'52"N, 118°46'31"W ±32.8ft ▲ 1191ft



Lower portion of Pyramid reach looking downstream. Choked and rocky portion of the reach.

☉ 43°NE (T) ● 34°32'56"N, 118°46'30"W ±16.4ft ▲ 1005ft



Lower portion of Pyramid reach looking downstream. Wide open stream bed with slow moving water.

☉ 347°N (T) ● 34°33'17"N, 118°46'32"W ±32.8ft ▲ 1171ft



10 Jan 2019, 09:51:37

Lower portion of Pyramid reach looking upstream. Small and Light rapids with low cfs. Potential for class III or IV rapids with higher flows.

☉ 37°NE (T) ● 34°33'58"N, 118°46'40"W ±16.4ft ▲ 1199ft



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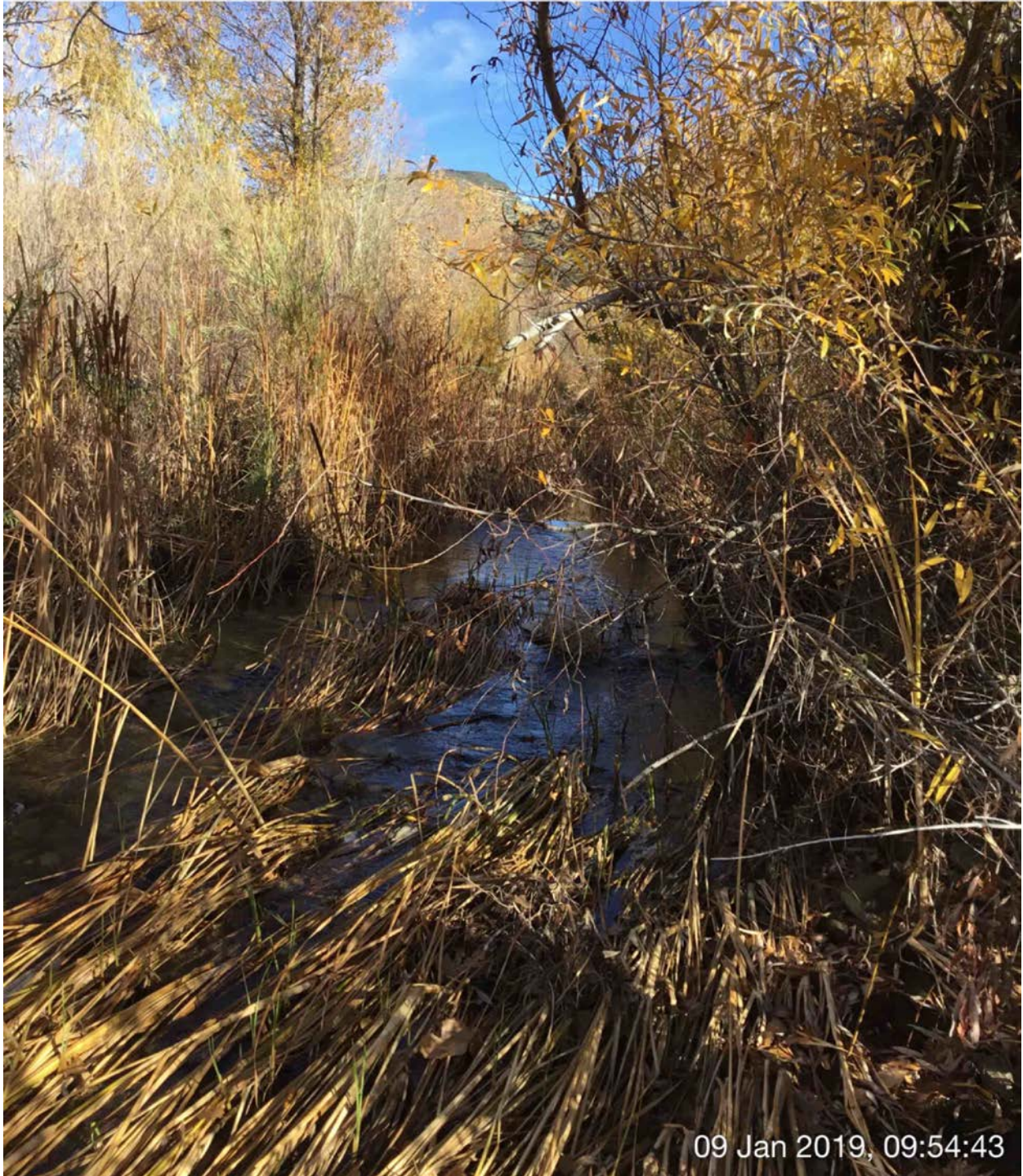
Lower portion of Pyramid reach looking downstream. Debris blocking travel downstream.

🌀 149°SE (T) 📍 34°34'41"N, 118°46'34"W ±16.4ft ▲ 1304ft



Lower portion of Pyramid reach looking downstream. Slow and steady moving water a class II for whitewater boaters.

☉ 2°N (T) ● 34°36'54"N, 118°44'43"W ±32.8ft ▲ 2098ft



Upper portion of Pyramid reach looking upstream at Frenchman's Flat. Choked vegetation throughout this section of the reach. Will likely be washed out with high flows.

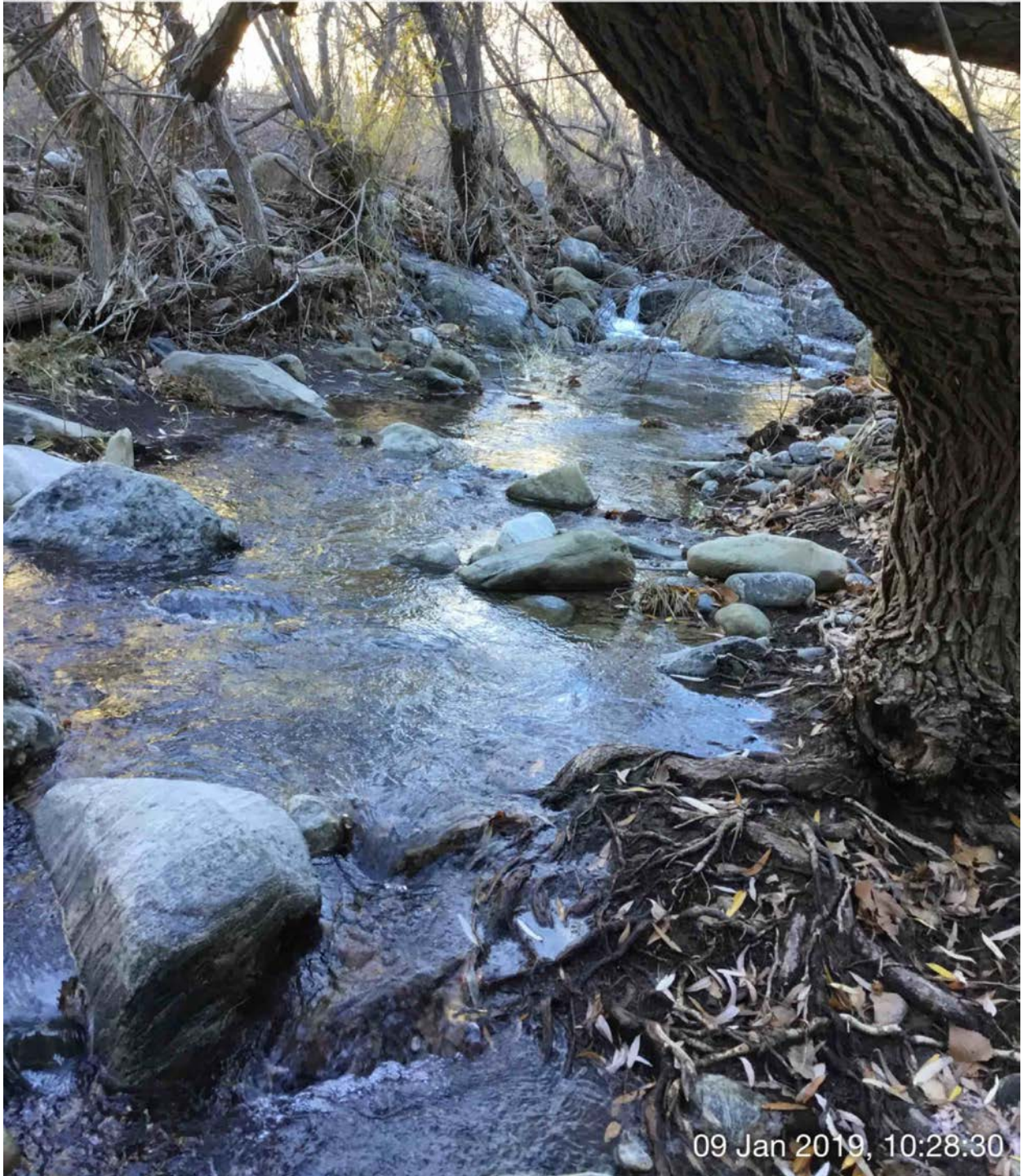
🌀 278°W (T) 📍 34°36'37"N, 118°45'4"W ±32.8ft ▲ 2003ft



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Upper portion of Pyramid reach looking downstream. Small waterfall looks impossible to boat with low flows but can be a good size drop with higher flows.

☉ 43°NE (T) ● 34°36'27"N, 118°45'13"W ±32.8ft ▲ 1982ft



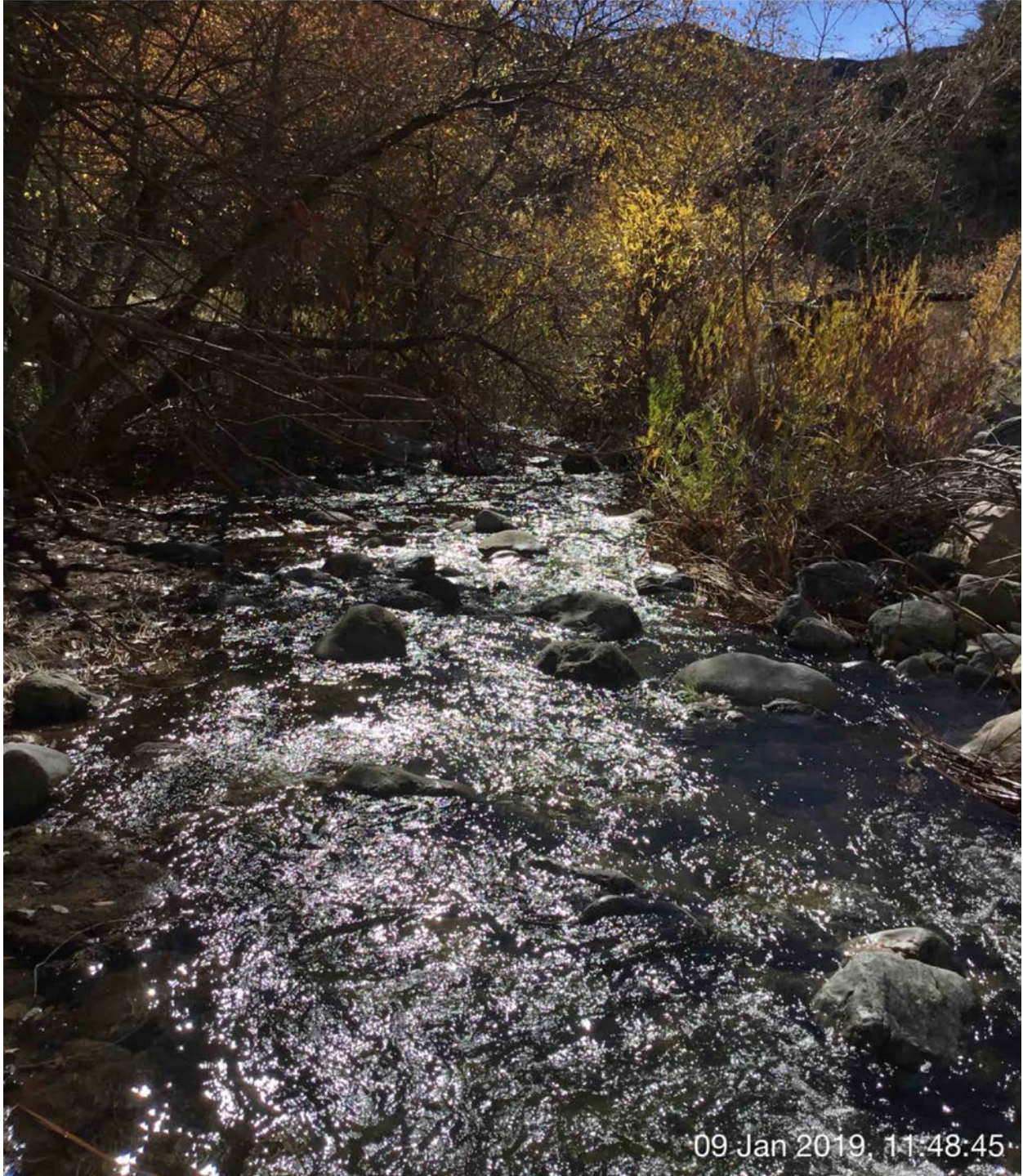
Upper portion of Pyramid reach looking downstream. This portion of the reach provides a good gradient to boat down with some rapids. Would be boatable with higher flows. Tight region with debris along the banks.

☀ 167°S (T) ● 34°36'31"N, 118°45'41"W ±32.8ft ▲ 1987ft



Upper portion of Pyramid reach looking upstream. Evidence that people camp in this reach along the wide sand banks.

☀ 175°S (T) ● 34°36'38"N, 118°46'12"W ±16.4ft ▲ 1873ft



Upper portion of Pyramid reach looking downstream. Narrow bank with faster moving water with a lot of vegetation along the sides.