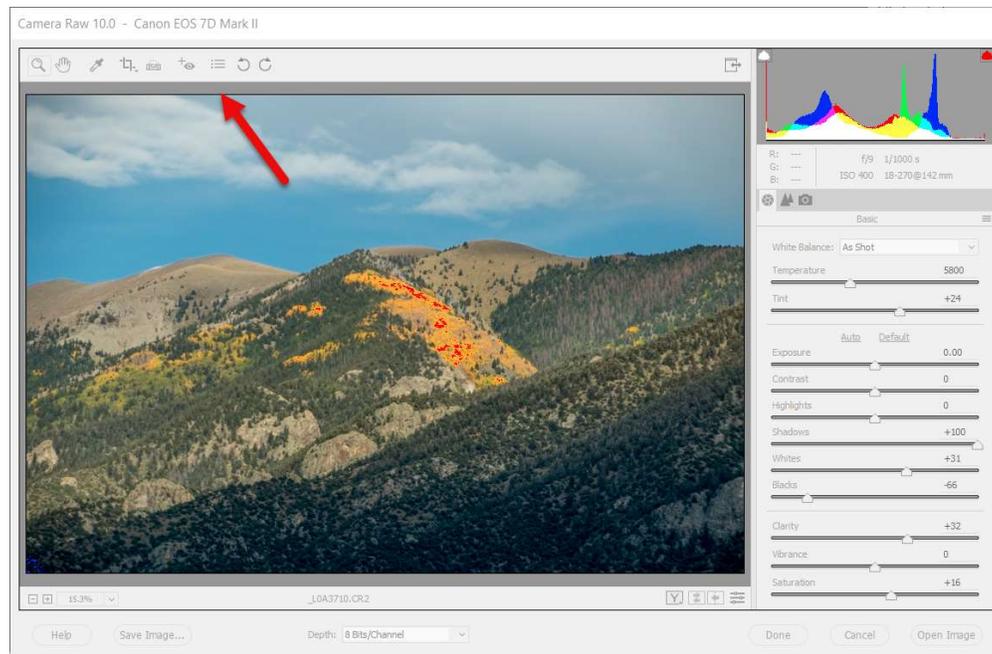# The Adobe Camera RAW (ACR)
Workspace in PSE 2018

This tutorial introduces the screen layout or workspace for the Adobe Camera RAW (ACR) editor that is included with Photoshop Elements 2018 (PSE 2018). The ACR that is included with Photoshop CC looks very similar, but includes several additional tabs/sliders. The tutorial is also compatible with more recent versions of PSE.

When you select a RAW image in the Organizer and then choose one of the edit modes under the Fix tab, or open a RAW image from PSE's Full Editor, the image is opened in ACR editor as shown in the figure below.

Adobe Camera RAW Editor

In the upper left-hand corner of the workspace there are nine icons representing various tools, including the Zoom Tool, Hand Tool, etc. A future tutorial will cover these tools. The third icon from the right of this group, as shown by the red arrow in the above figure opens the Preferences dialog.

For our purposes, we will not change any of the defaults, but a couple are worth noting here. No matter how you edit a RAW image file with the ACR, the original image is never altered. The editing changes are either saved in a central database, or in a separate "sidecar" .xmp file, which is the default setting. If you delete the sidecar file, the ACR editing done to the file is deleted. But as soon as you again open the image in the ACR, a new sidecar file is generated.
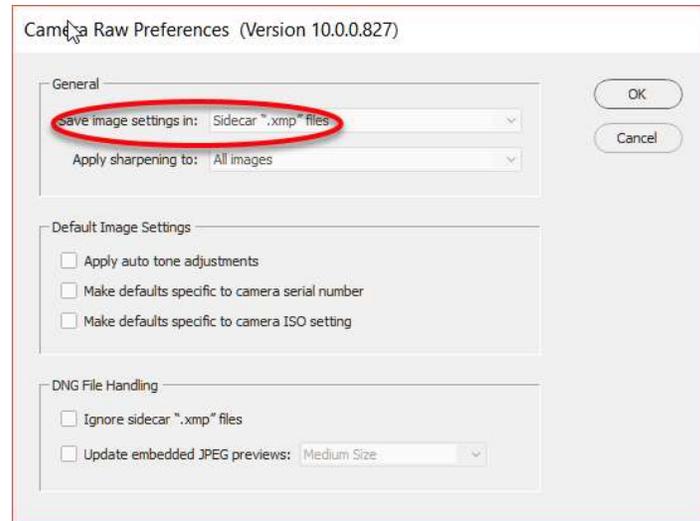
ACR Preferences Dialog

Shown at the top of the Preferences dialog is the version of the ACR currently installed. Adobe periodically releases updates to the ACR as new cameras are released, since the RAW format is different for each manufacturer/camera model. These free version updates are available from the Adobe website. You should periodically check for the latest version of ACR that is compatible with your version of PSE.

In the lower left of the workspace, there is a Save Image button. Generally, we will not be using this option. It is primarily used to save the RAW image in the non-proprietary .dng format promoted by Adobe. As shown in the figure below, this dialog is used to select the folder where the .dng files would be stored. The default is the folder where the original RAW file is located.
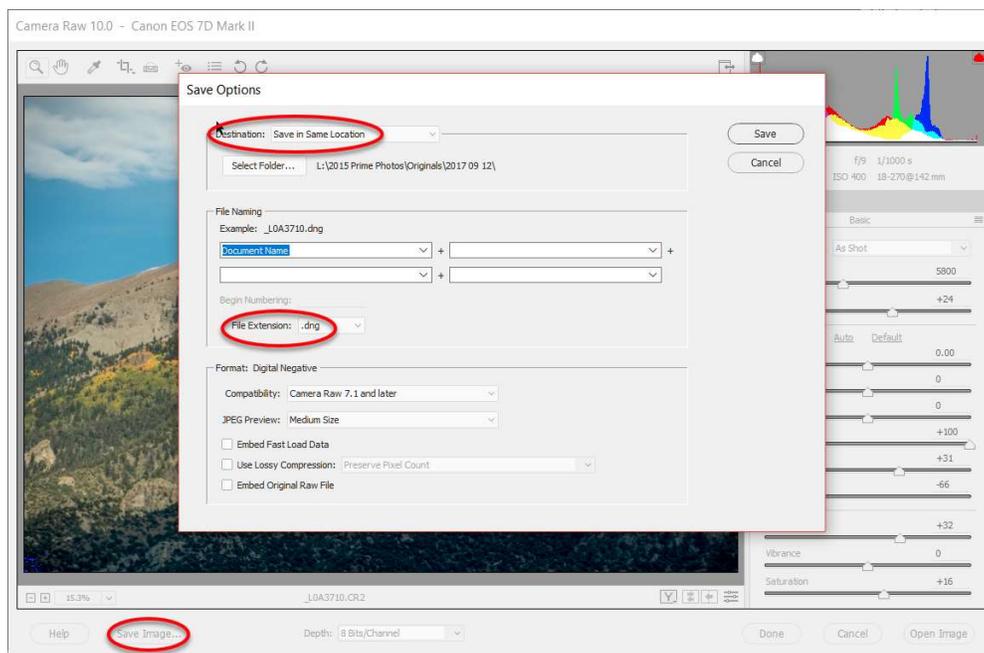
Save Image Dialog

In the upper right hand corner of the ACR workspace is a histogram for the composite channel, as well as the red, green, and blue channel histograms. The basic camera settings for the the image are also displayed in this same area as seen in the following figure. The ACR always opens with the Basic pallet selected. There are two other pallets in the ACR, Detail and Camera Calibration. In the figure below, the red circle is over the Basic window icon.
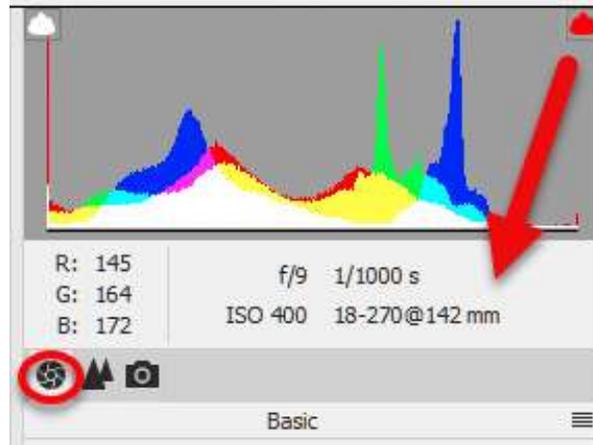

Histogram and Camera Metadata

The triangle icon to the right of the Basic pallet's icon is for selecting the Detail pallet. As shown in the figure below, this pallet is used to sharpen the image and for noise reduction. The figure also shows the default settings for these two controls.

ACR Detail Pallet

The camera icon to the right of the Detail pallet's icon is for selecting the Camera Calibration pallet. This pallet can be used to select certain picture styles unique to a given camera model and is shown in the following figure.
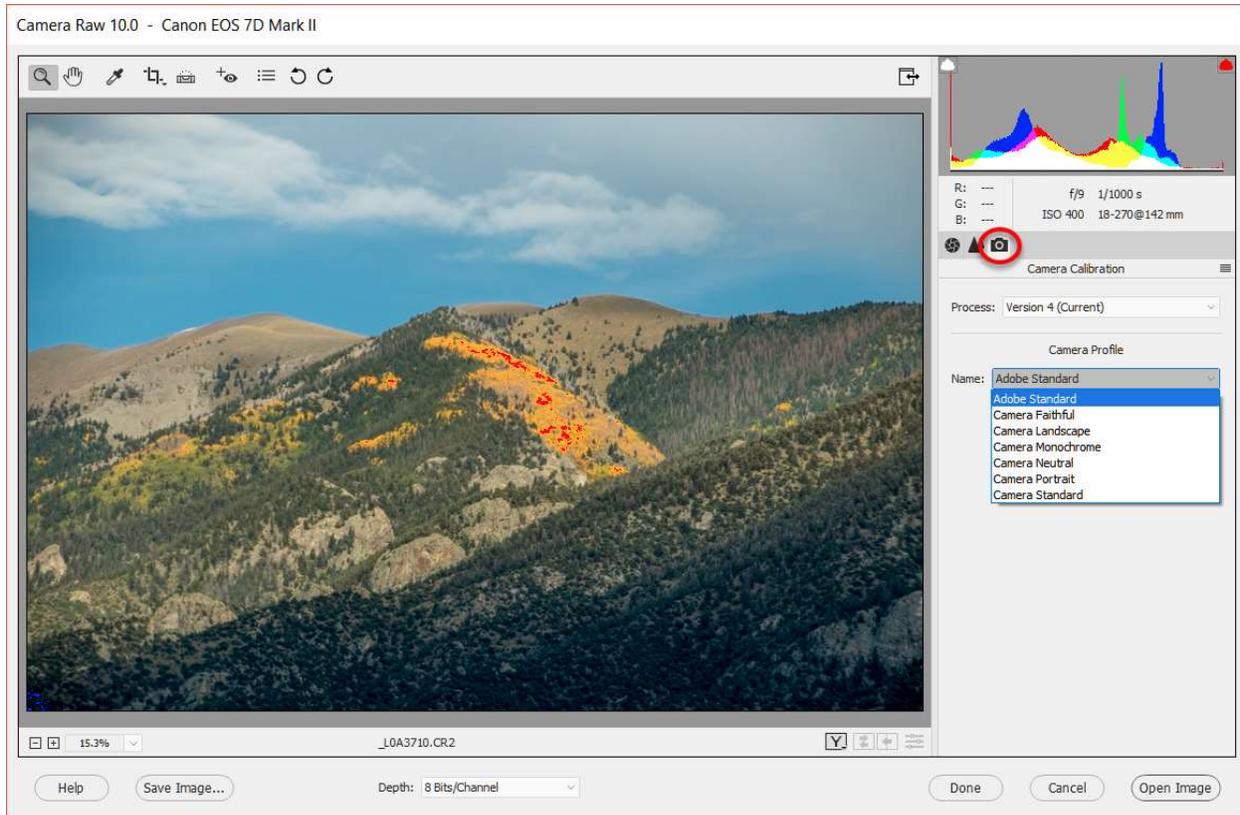
Camera Calibration Pallet

Finally, across the bottom of the workspace are the buttons that control how the image will be handled upon exiting the ACR. Normally, to edit the image further in the Photo Editor, you will click on the Open Image button. This will open the image in PSE 2018's Expert mode of the Photo Editor. The figure below also shows the button for selecting a color bit depth of either 8 bits or 16 bits. Normally, we will use the 8-bit setting; otherwise most of the filters and commands within the Full Editor are not available. However, there are times when 16 bits is selected for the corrections applied in the ACR, and then the image file is converted to an 8-bit file for follow-on processing in the Photo Editor.

Image Controls for Exiting the ACR

In coming tutorials, we will cover how to use the various editing capabilities of the ACR.