From: Justin Benton
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject: Upper Chatooga river access
Date: 07/29/2008 10:01 AM

July 28 2008

RE: Chattooga River Project Comments

Dear Sumter National Forest,

My Name is Justin Benton I am a Critical Care Paramedic and wilderness guide. I am a LNT instructor and have spent many years teaching respect and conservation of our wilderness. I am writing you in regards to thte current ban on kayak access to the Upper Chatooga.

I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment regarding the recreational management of the Chattooga River. I disagree with your analysis and your proposal. Both treat me and my community of river enthusiasts unfairly and your proposal would not meet my interests. Please consider the following concerns I have regarding this issue:

Primairly, I believe it to beflawed that the USFS showes such discrimination to kayakers without cause. It is my belief that these waterways are public property and access to them should be free to all to enjoy. I can respect the USFS decisions to limit access to areas to preserve and protect the wildlife. In the grand scheme of things I find it difficult to imagine how kayaking could be seen as such a diabolocial force against nature as we cause no erosion, we dont disturb any soil or plant species and as a group kayakers are some of the most proactive river stewards that I have spent time with. Our enjoyment of these waterways would cause some of the lowest impact of any recreational use. Surely stocking non-native fish species has a higher environmental impact than allowing public access to float kayaks down the water.

Thank you for considering these comments. Please consider conducting a real user capacity analysis and immediately allowing boating in the same numbers, places, and seasons that you allow existing users. Paddling should be allowed in a similar manner to your alternative number 8, except on the *entire* Upper Chattooga River and its tributaries.

Thank you for considering these comments,

Sincerely

Justin Benton
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