From: Heath Hewett
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject: Chattooga River Project Comments
Date: 07/29/2008 07:00 PM

Dear Sumter National Forest,

I am a resident of the state of South Carolina, a professional in the Financial Services industry and an avid whitewater paddler. I have enjoyed paddling many rivers in the Southeast and the recreational management of the Chattooga River is very personal to me.

I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment regarding the recreational management of the Chattooga River. I disagree with your analysis and the associated proposal. Both treat me and my community of river enthusiasts unfairly and your proposal would not meet my interests. Please take the following concerns of mine into consideration :* [*

* The USFS has spent thirteen years searching for a reason to limit paddling on the Chattooga and has found/ none/. It is time to open the river to boating.
* The EA is not a user capacity analysis and does not reference one. The AW appeal decision required a user capacity analysis. Where is it?
* The EA and preferred alternative are not equitable or protective of the river because they considers boating to be the only management variable, while other larger more impactful uses are not seriously considered for limits.
* The USFS preferred alternative includes a total ban on 2/3 of the upper river, a ban on tributary boating, and allows only 0-6 days of limited boating on the remaining reach – while allowing all other wilderness conforming existing uses in unlimited numbers.. This is not equitable and not acceptable!
* The EA offers no basis for the boating bans and limits
* The EA lacks a full range of alternatives
* The USFS hired qualified consultants and then ignored their input
* The 450 CFS average daily flow trigger in the preferred alternative is a flawed measure that should be eliminated from any considerations. There is no way a paddler can know this number and will be an administrative burden for the agency.
* The public should have the right to float on public Wild and Scenic Rivers regardless of who owns the land along the river.

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,

Heath Hewett