



Handout A

Recreation Opportunities and their Desired Conditions

Following the public meeting in Clayton, Ga., on November 17, 2005, a Forest Service team compiled the input collected from attendees to develop a list of primary recreation activities, or recreation opportunities, for the upper Chattooga River. The team also summarized information regarding the ideal situation for those recreation opportunities, also known as the Desired Conditions. Six recreation opportunities and associated desired conditions were identified:

- **Day Hiking**
- **Backpacking**
- **Frontcountry (Easy Access) General Recreation**
- **Challenge-Focused Boating**
- **Scenery-Focused Boating**
- **Backcountry Angling**

After reviewing the list, the Forest Service team added a seventh recreation opportunity - **Frontcountry Angling** - to represent a known existing use that was not represented by attendees at the November meeting.

The opportunities and desired conditions discussed below are preliminary and subject to change. There is still much we do not know about these users. The Forest Service core team is presenting this information to the public for feedback, since these opportunities and desired conditions will be the ones carried forward into the next steps of the Visitor Use Capacity Analysis.

Day Hiking

This group enjoys day hiking and related activities on developed trails throughout the river corridor from the Chattooga River Trail parking area on Whiteside Cove Road in North Carolina to Highway 28 in South Carolina. The most popular areas are around Burrells Ford road, Walhalla Fish Hatchery/Chattooga Picnic Area, and the Bull Pen Bridge.

These recreationists want to see and experience remote and spectacular settings that include forested ridges, rock outcrops, ancient groves of white pine and hemlock, waterfalls, clear water crashing over and around massive boulders, wildlife and their signs, birds, plants and wildflowers, and fall color.

They like to experience their activity by themselves or with friends and family in groups of 2-8 people. They go 2-15 times per year on 2-6 hour trips. They are more accepting of encounters with other groups or individuals along trails than they are at attractions/destinations (e.g. waterfalls, river).



Best time to go is during the spring, summer and fall.

Trails, river banks, designated campsites, designated parking areas, and access roads are in good condition, free from litter, and facilities are in appropriate locations. There is no new development.

Other users encountered are also non-motorized and non-commercial, have a high regard for the experiences of fellow recreationists, and have a strong environmental ethic. There are no tubers or rafters. All users are unified against the major threats to this pristine river corridor – development, and water quality degradation.

Complementary activities include picnicking, swimming, fishing, wildlife viewing, birding, and photography.

Backpacking

This group enjoys the challenge of backpacking on developed trails throughout the river corridor from the Chattooga River Trail parking area on Whiteside Cove Road in North Carolina to Highway 28 in South Carolina. The most popular areas are the Ellicott Rock Wilderness Area (along the Chattooga River) and the Chattooga River Trail from Burrells Ford Road to Highway 28.

Similar to day hikers, these recreationists want to see and experience remote and spectacular settings that include forested ridges, rock outcrops, ancient groves of white pine and hemlock, waterfalls, clear water crashing over and around massive boulders, wildlife and their signs, birds, plants and wildflowers, and fall color. The vast majority like to camp close to the Chattooga River or a tributary.

They like to experience their activity in groups of 2-8 people, 2-4 times per year, for 2-7 day trips. Solitude is more important than for day hikers and boaters, particularly at overnight campsite and on the river (attractions/destinations). They prefer to encounter not more than 3-4 other groups per trip (in small parties), and none at campsite.

Backpacking occurs throughout the year, but the most popular time is spring, summer and fall.

Trails, river banks, designated campsites, fire rings, and designated parking areas are free from litter, and facilities are in appropriate locations. There is no new development.

Other users encountered are also non-motorized and non-commercial, have a high regard for the experiences of fellow recreationists, and have a strong environmental ethic. There are no tubers or rafters. All users are unified against the major threats to this pristine river corridor – development, and water quality degradation.



Complementary activities include fishing, photography, nature study, wildlife viewing, wildflower viewing and plant identification.

Frontcountry (Easy Access) General Recreation

This group of recreationists swim and visit attractions within ¼ mile of roads. Nodes include Burrells Ford, Walhalla Fish Hatchery/Chattooga Picnic Area, and the Bull Pen bridge.

This group desires to experience spectacular settings that are easily accessible from roads. Primary activities include swimming, fishing, and picnicking along the river.

They like to experience their activities with friends and family in groups of 2-8 people for 2-6 hour day trips. They like privacy at their selected attraction/destination (generally the river itself).

Best time to go is between May and September.

Trails, river banks, designated parking areas, and access roads are in good condition, free from litter, and facilities are in appropriate locations. There is no new development.

Other users encountered are also non-motorized and non-commercial, have a high regard for the experiences of fellow recreationists, and have a strong environmental ethic. There are no tubers or rafters.

Because this is general recreation including a number of activities, no complementary activities were identified.

Challenge-Focused Boating

This group enjoys the entire section from Grimshawes bridge to Highway 28, with Grimshawes to Bull Pen (BP) being the most challenging, followed by Burrells Ford to Highway 28, and finally Bull Pen to Burrells Ford (BF).

This group is highly skilled and wants to experience a remote and spectacular natural setting while tackling challenging and extreme whitewater. This includes negotiating drops, waterfalls, “tight and technical” water (small channel size, tight turns, short eddies), and at least one Class IV rapid. They tend to use the latest in high performance equipment - kayaks, decked canoes, and high performance inflatable kayaks.

They like to experience their activity in small groups (1-6 people per trip). Go 10-20 times per year, 4-5 hours per trip, mostly day trips. Solitude (number of encounters with other groups) is an added value, but not a critical part of the experience.



Best time to go would be summer and fall after heavy rains. However, because of traditional weather patterns, most of the activity would occur December through May when water levels are higher (above 2.0 feet at the Highway 76 gauge).

They see clean water, outstanding scenery, and river access sites that are in good condition, in appropriate locations, and free from litter. There is no new development.

Other users are non-motorized and non-commercial, have a high regard for the experiences of fellow recreationists, and have a strong environmental ethic. There are no tubers or rafters. All users are unified against the major threats to this pristine river corridor – development, and water quality degradation.

Complementary activities include camping, hiking, fishing, picnicking.

Scenery Focused Boating

This group enjoys all river segments above Highway 28. They enjoy remote and spectacular natural settings, the thrill of going through rapids, and seeing clear water. They are either not as skilled as the “Challenge focused boater,” or don’t have the desire to tackle extreme whitewater – they would tend to portage around the major rapids.

Their groups tend to be a little larger (2-10). They go 10-20 times per year, mostly 3-8 hour day trips, with some multi-day. Solitude is nice, but similar to the “Challenge focused boaters,” not a critical part of the experience. They have a strong sense of place and attachment to the river.

Best time to go is during the warmer months and in good weather, but there is generally not enough water during these times. Many will boat all year if the water is right (above 2 feet at the Highway 76 gauge) – these conditions tend to occur during winter and spring.

They see clean water, outstanding scenery, and river access sites that are in good condition, in appropriate locations, and free from litter. There is no new development.

Other users are non-motorized and non-commercial, have a high regard for the experiences of fellow recreationists, and have a strong environmental ethic. There are no tubers or rafters. All users are unified against the major threats to this pristine river corridor – development, and water quality degradation.

Complementary activities include camping, sightseeing, wildlife viewing, picnicking, nature study, and photography.



Backcountry Angling

This group enjoys the entire river from just above Norton Mill Creek to Highway 28. The most popular stretch is the Burrells Ford to Highway 28 section, which includes an area managed for delayed harvest between Reed Creek and Highway 28. These anglers generally travel at least ¼ mile from roads, but then work short sections of stream during each trip (when compared to boaters).

This group includes highly skilled anglers (dry and wet fly, rod and reel) for whom the solitary, remote and spectacular natural setting in which their activity occurs (composed of forested ridges, rock outcrops, groves of white pine and hemlock, boulders and rushing, clear water) is more important than the activity itself. They have a strong sense of place and attachment to the river.

They like to experience their activity in small groups (1-4 people per trip). Solitude is very important to the experience, with some going Sunday afternoon through Friday to minimize encounters with other individuals or groups. They are willing to complete user permits.

They go fishing 10-50 times per year, on 4-8 hour trips, with some multi-day/overnight trips. For many, wading is part of their fishing activity. However, many won't attempt to wade fish when water levels are around 2.0 feet or higher at the Highway 76 gauge.

This activity takes place throughout the year, but the best times are in March, April, May, October and November because the fish are most active then. The fishing is least desirable in July and August.

They see outstanding scenery, clean water, wild/naturalized/large trout, and trails, designated campsites and designated parking areas that are in good condition, in appropriate locations, and free from litter. There is no new development.

Encounters with other anglers/waders, boaters and other recreationists are such that solitude and fishing activity are minimally affected (e.g. few encounters and minimal spooked fish). Boating never comes close to the use levels in the lower Chattooga. All users encountered are non-motorized and non-commercial, have a high regard for the experiences of fellow recreationists, and have a strong environmental ethic. There are no tubers or rafters. All users are unified against the major threats to this pristine river corridor – development, and water quality degradation.

Complementary activities include hiking, backpacking, camping, nature study, wildlife observation, photography.



Frontcountry Angling

(This group was not represented at the November 17 meeting).

This group of anglers tends to fish within ¼ mile of roads and bridges – specifically, the “put and take” areas around Bull Pen Bridge, Burrells Ford and Highway 28 bridges. The success of the fishing activity is very important to them, while the spectacular natural setting is secondary.

This group is not as concerned about solitude, and can tolerate a higher number of encounters with other individuals/groups than backcountry users. They visit several times per year while trout stocking is occurring in groups of 1-5 people. Their trips last 4-5 hours, and are mainly day trips.

Complementary activities include camping and picnicking.