From: Dan Guthrie
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us; akimbell@fs.fed.us
Subject: Chattooga Comments
Date: 08/14/2008 10:59 AM

Dear Sir,

I have been wanting to submit a few comments on your proposed management plan of the Upper Chattooga River, but didn't know how or where to start. Last weekend, a boating buddy, asked if I wanted to head over to the whitewater park in Charlotte, SC. I declined. I am an avid whitewater boater, but I just can't bring myself to go to that place.

Its nothing more than a man made glorified ditch of concrete and rebar. The water is channeled, pumped and funneled; forced to perform as if it were some circus animal. The place simply doesn't have a soul. And that's why I decided to write you about the Upper Chattooga Management Plan.

The most wonderful thing about kayaking is how I become a part of nature's breath and life force – water! When it rains, my world comes alive: rivers swell, plants soak in the glory, and the mountains call my name. I have been blessed enough to boat many remote, intimate rivers and creeks across the southeast during those rare moments when rain has brought the river to life. I have seen things and been places that no hiker could ever reach. I have quietly floated past fragile environments that footsteps would destroy. I have reveled in the quiet moments and the pulsing rush of rain fed rivers. There are moments I feel my soul, my life force is a part of it all. I truly have been blessed by nature's wonders.

I have hiked many stretches of the Upper Chattooga, although, admittedly, simply to glimpse a river I'm not allowed to be a part of. I have also seen Upper Chattooga anglers who, I'm sure, feel the same sense of connection to nature. Yet, I feel sorry for them. Their sport is little more than a different type of Charlotte Whitewater Park: born of a concrete and rebar ditch at the Walhalla Fish Hatchery and unceremoniously dumped into the river, like circus animals forced to perform.

I wait for nature to invite me in, they force themselves on mother nature. It's just not right.

I could write a long wordy letter about how Alternative #4 panders to anglers, doesn't treat boaters equally, doesn't allow enough boaters to use the river, is too restrictive with water levels, doesn't have a long enough season, etc…. but I'm sure you've heard it all before.

I simply would like to be a part of (i.e. boat) the Upper Chattooga legally. I think there is a reasonable compromise that will allow boating in this wonderful wilderness, while not significantly disrupting angler's (man made) sport.

May I suggest:

~ Access to all river sections and tributaries above Hwy 28, excluding private land areas.
~ Allow eight groups of boaters with a maximum of six boaters per group at each put-in.
~ Establish a boating season from December 1 through May 31
~ Allow boating when water levels are 2.1 feet, or higher, on the USGS Chattooga River near Clayton gage or similar USGS style gage. (2.1 feet is simply a good guess since I've never run it and your data suggests it's a good compromise)

~ A permit system for every user in the Upper Chattooga

My heart, my soul and I would greatly appreciate it if you would allow greater access to this breathtaking natural resource, by the boating public.

Sincerely

Dan Guthrie,
Ball Ground, GA