From: CCWALBRIDGE@cs.com
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject: Upper Chatooga Comments
Date: 08/14/2008 12:24 PM

U.S. Forest Service
Chattooga River Project
4931 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29212.

August 8, 2008

RE: Chattooga River Project Comments

My name is Charlie Walbridge and I live in Bruceton Mills, West Virginia. I am a whitewater canoeist and I paddled the upper Chatooga in 1974, before the ban. It is an outstanding resource, well suited to our sport. When the water is high enough to paddle, the fishing is poor. There is no logical reason to close the river to boating. The public has the clear right to float a Wild and Scenic River.

I reviewed the Environmental Assessment regarding recreation management on the Upper Chattooga River. I disagree with your analysis because it treats river paddlers unfairly. The EA is not equitable because it considers boating to be the only management variable, while other larger uses are not considered for limits. The 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 unacceptable.

The USFS has spent thirteen years searching for a reason to limit paddling on the Chattooga and found none. It hired qualified consultants and ignored them. The current EA is over a year late, lacks a full range of alternatives, and wasted millions in taxpayer money.T regardless of who owns the land along the river.

Thank you for considering these comments. Please conduct a real user capacity analysis. In the interim, please allow whitewater paddling in the same numbers, places, and seasons that you allow other types of uses, like hiking, camping, and fishing.

Sincerely

Charlie Walbridge
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