From: Mike Sorrel
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject: Chatooga River Pedestrian Zone
Date: 08/10/2008 03:43 PM

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to you to share my comments on the future of the Chattooga River north of Hwy 28. My comments are based on over forty years of personal experiences as an outdoorsman. I use the term outdoorsman because I love to hike, hunt, fish, kayak, canoe, ski and windsurf. Kite boarding looks like a lot of fun too, but I'm going to leave that to younger people.

I've traveled to 18 countries including New Zealand which I feel is the greenest country in the world. Even commercial airlines have mufflers on the jet engines of planes flying within the country. I will never forget the guided fishing trip I went on while visiting there. We took a helicopter to a section of river on a Mauri Reservation that allows catch & release fishing with artificial barb less flies only on a 1 permit per week per mile basis. The first question you ask when the helicopter flies away is "How long does it take to hike out of here?" The guide having answered this question before quickly replies "It takes two days to walk out and I have enough food for three days just in case we want to take more time." Based on the pristine conditions you would probably want to take more time. I have never been to any other place in my life that had absolutely no evidence of man having ever been there before. No trails, no signs, no litter. Absolutely nothing. That was 7 years ago and I would like to think that river is still being preserved in exactly the same way.

If I were to go back there and find that I had to dodge boaters while fishing I am sure the experience would not be as enjoyable. I don't have anything against boating. I own a kayak and I paddle at least once a week. If I had experienced that same stretch of river by kayak I would probably have enjoyed it for many of the same reasons, but I would have been pissed I didn't bring a fishing pole.

The bottom line is you can fish from a boat, but you can't fish through a boat. This simple observation shows fisherman need "boat free" areas they can go to truly enjoy their form of recreation.

In addition I offer another point of view. If I hit a pedestrian with my car I am responsible for any harm unless the pedestrian was jay-walking in an urban area or on a limited access highway prohibiting pedestrians. There are thousands of places where pedestrians are given exclusive use of an area. Sidewalks, cross walks, hiking trails, parks, and pedestrian malls.

If I hit a pedestrian while riding my bike I am responsible for any harm. I can't think of a place where I wouldn't be.

If I hit a swimmer with my boat I am responsible for any harm. I can't think of a place where I wouldn't be.

If I hit a wading fisherman with my boat I am responsible for any harm. I can't think of a place where I wouldn't be.

Please maintain the boat-free section of the Chattooga. Call it a pedestrian zone. I've got plenty places to take my boat. I don't have many places I can go to be safe from boats.

Regards,

Mike Sorrel