From: Jascomb, Jerry
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Cc: akimbell@fs.fed.us
Subject: Upper Chattooga Boating Ban
Date: 08/18/2008 10:45 AM

Dear Forest Service –

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed boating ban for the Upper Chattooga.

I am an avid trout fisherman and whitewater kayaker from the Atlanta area, and lifelong resident and native of Georgia. I am also a dedicated environmental activist and outdoor enthusiast who has enjoyed hiking, fishing and kayaking the Chattooga River for over three decades now. I am a designer of medical devices professionally, but love to escape to the wildness and solitude of the Chattooga area as an antidote to the stresses and anxieties of urban living and the corporate life.

I support Alternative 8 and here's why:

- The boating ban on kayaks and canoes is simply unreasonable and unfairly excludes one user group that has the LEAST impact on the river and surrounding area. Kayakers/Canoeists merely pass through quietly without creating and eroding trails as I've seen us fishermen and hikers do.
- Sumter Forest did not take into account the user study and environmental assessment (EA) that it paid millions for at taxpayer expense.
- Sumter Forest hired qualified consultants then ignored their input and recommendations.
- There is no user capacity analysis as was required.
- The proposed flow limits of 450 cfs avg daily flow is totally unworkable, and not real-time. When the data is analyzed to confirm 450 cfs and announced – the water will be gone by then in the vast majority of rain events.
- Whitewater kayaking and canoeing is allowed and flourishes throughout the U.S. on National Wild and Scenic Rivers without user conflicts. Why is only the Chattooga considered the special preserve of only one particular user group of fishermen (of which I am one) when this is not necessary in the other National Forests? It smacks of elitism and pandering to an influential and politically-connected user group only – Trout Unlimited.

I have kayaked all over the southeast national forests, and have never encountered fishermen at the same time rivers and streams are high enough for boating except on the Tellico and Nantahala – and there were no conflicts involved nor impact to fishing. I have been kayaking Overflow Creek on the West Fork Chattooga headwaters since 1992 – and again, have never encountered trout fishermen except on 2 occasions – and they were below the takeout bridge after boaters already exit the river. Overflow alone proves that there are no restrictions necessary to kayaking/canoeing and no conflicts with trout angling as the creek is only boatable during very high flows when I have never seen fishermen active in the stretch that is kayaked.

Please do not cave in to one special interest group (Trout Unlimited) to dedicate a public resource to a private group for their exclusive pleasure through artificial means – the helicopter and truck stocking of non-native trout such as Rainbows and Browns. Does not the National Forest and Chattooga belong to all Americans?
I enjoy fishing for Browns and Rainbows too, but I do not advocate excluding others from a public resource as long as they do no environmental harm and respect it. Kayaking/Canoeing is very low-impact pursuit. We take only memories and leave no trace.

I would encourage the Forest Service to act with fairness and ignore overemotional pleas for exclusivity and the rampant misinformation disseminated by groups such at Trout Unlimited.

Sincerely,

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