From: G. Richard Mode
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject: Upper Chattooga Management comments
Date: 08/18/2008 04:15 PM

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on future management of the Chattooga River. I have followed this issue with much concern since Appalachian Whitewater filed its' lawsuit to gain access to the upper 21 miles of this protected headwater habitat. Having grown up in North Carolina I have seen the recreational experiences of hunters, anglers, and wildlife observers severely damaged along most major rivers in the western part of the state by over use by boaters. I have been saddened by habitat destruction endemic to this type over use of fragile riparian habitats. On this river alone hunters, anglers, and wildlife observers have basically ceded use of the lower 36 miles to boating. Now the boaters want it all.

I can "live with" alternative 4 as the stated preferred alternative of the USFS; however the much better management decision is no boating at all on the Upper Chattooga. I consider the original zoning of the river to be progressive resource management before its time. It is a concept that will need to be employed more and more as an infinite number of users attempt to use a finite resource.

I am so unused to a debate like this. I have spent close to 40 years as a wildlife and habitat resource advocate. Till now all groups of outdoorsmen and women I have worked with have put the resource first and have accepted the fact that usage is a privilege, not a right. They have at least considered the interests and needs of the resource and other user groups. Although many boaters, me included, are good stewards of the land, the instigators who have tied up USFS resources and the resources of legitimate conservation organizations for many years are simply wrong. Their only interest is their interest. It is time for the USFS to put an end to this terrible waste of resources and rule on behalf of habitat protection, and protection of recreational experiences of the entire public. It is time for the USFS to defend its' mandate and the mandate of all other resource management agencies and their ability to manage public resources. It is time for the agency to show that it cannot be bullied by a single interest group.

Sincerely,

G. Richard Mode

Morganton, NC