From: Diane Cheshier
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject: Boating on the Chattooga
Date: 08/18/2008 05:01 PM

U.S. Forest Service
Chattooga River Project
4931 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29212.
comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us

8/18/08

RE: Chattooga River Project Comments

Dear Sumter National Forest,

My husband and I are members of the Arkansas Canoe Club; we live and work near Fort Smith, Arkansas. We have been involved in the sport for about six years now, and are both certified instructors with the American Canoe Association. We are very passionate about the sport and appreciate the opportunity to kayak the streams and rivers of Arkansas, as well as the other states we visit. The Chattooga is a treasure for all Americans, and we would like to share our thoughts with you about the management of river access to this Wild and Scenic River.

We have reviewed the Environmental Assessment regarding the recreational management of the Chattooga River, and we disagree with your analysis and proposal. Both treat our community of river enthusiasts unfairly and your proposal would not meet our interests. Please consider the following concerns I have regarding this issue:

- The USFS has spent thirteen years searching for a reason to limit paddling on the Chattooga and has found *none*. It is time to open the river to boating.
- No alternative is acceptable because they all include boating bans on the upper Chattooga Cliffs reach and on tributaries – without any justification.
- The EA and preferred alternative are not equitable or protective of the river because they considers boating to be the only management variable, while other larger more impactful uses are not seriously considered for limits.
- The USFS 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 not equitable and not acceptable!
- The EA offers no basis for the boating bans and limits
- The EA lacks a full range of alternatives
- The EA is no better or different than the last one, is at least a year late and has wasted millions in tax payer money
- Paddlers prefer an alternative similar to Alternative 8 that 1) fully allows boating on the entire Chattooga River below Grimshawes Bridge, 2) allows paddling on tributaries, 3) includes encounter standards based on a real user capacity analysis, 4) will *equitably* limit *total* use only when encounter standards are consistently exceeded, and 5) will do so using all available indirect measures first.
- The public should have the right to float on public Wild and Scenic Rivers regardless of who owns the land along the river.
- All aspects of the “Outstanding Remarkable Values” of Wild and Scenic Rivers should be protected on the entire river, not just in some areas.

Thank you for considering these comments. Please consider conducting a real user capacity analysis and immediately allowing boating in the same numbers, places, and seasons that you allow existing users. Paddling should be allowed in a similar manner to your alternative number 8, except on the *entire* Upper Chattooga River and its tributaries.

Thank you for considering these comments,

Sincerely,

Diane and Andy Cheshier

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