From: Paul Harwood
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject: RE: Chattooga River Project Comments
Date: 08/13/2008 12:18 PM

Dear Sumter National Forest,

My name is Paul Harwood, I am from Golden, British Columbia. I have been a professional river guide for 19 years, I am also an instructor of a collage adventure tourism program and an Avalanche Forecaster and Backcountry Skiing Guide.

I have had the good fortune to spend much of my personal time and tourism dollars paddling and enjoying many of the United States Wild and Scenic Rivers. I spend a significant amount of time and energy on RIVER ACCESS and RIVER PROTECTION issues here in Canada.

I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment regarding the recreational management of the Chattooga River. I disagree with your analysis and your proposal. The number one priority of land management should be the protection and sustainability of a region or watershed. In some areas I have fought and argued for restricted use and access as this is often appropriate in order to maintain the integrity of a region. However, this has to be evenly applied to all user groups. Otherwise, it will inherently fail in its goal of protecting and maintaining sustainability of a region.

I was absolutely floored when I read how illogical your proposal is. How can fishermen be allowed to tromp all over the riparian zone, walk on the river bed with no restrictions, yet floating the river is deemed inappropriate? Hiking and camping, have a more significant impact than river travel, and yet there are no restrictions to numbers of users? I am unaware of the regions local politics and issues, but it is obvious that the community of river enthusiasts are being treated unfairly. Watersheds need holistic management plans, and your current management plan falls well short of this.

* The EA is not a user capacity analysis and does not reference one.
* The EA offers no basis for the boating bans and limits
* 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.

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