From: Benjamin Gilbert
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject: Chattooga River Project Comments
Date: 08/18/2008 11:07 AM

U.S. Forest Service
Chattooga River Project
4931 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29212.

August, 18. 2009

RE: Chattooga River Project Comments

Dear Sumter National Forest,

I am an Engineer at a Biopharmaceutical Company in North Carolinia. I am a white water kayaking enthusiast. I boat more than 75 days a year and consider the activity to be the most life affirming and uplifting activities available. I think the boating community is one of the most environmentally aware groups and I believe this community has an appreciation of and sensitivty to experiancing nature far beyond that of the average citizen in this country. I also believe that the boating community demonstrates a sensitivity and appreciation to others experiance that has not seen in return.

I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment regarding the recreational management of the Chattooga River. I disagree with your analysis and your proposal. Both treat me and my community of river enthusiasts unfairly and your proposal would not meet my 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.
- 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 is no better or different than the last one, is at least a year late and has wasted millions in tax payer money
- The USFS hired qualified consultants and then ignored their input
- The 450 CFS average daily flow trigger in the preferred alternative is a flawed measure that should be eliminated from any considerations. There is no way a paddler can know this number and will be an administrative burden for the agency.
- I 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.

I do not think that the activities of fishing and boating are really in as much conflict as the activity around the EA suggests. I believe the conflict has been aggravated by individuals who are biased and who have failed to evaluate the issue in a fair and reasonable manner.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Paddling should be allowed in a similar manner to your alternative number 8, except on the *entire* Upper Chattooga River and its tributaries.

Sincerely

Ben Gilbert
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