From:	Allen Hedden
To:	comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject:	Chattooga River Project Comments
Date:	08/18/2008 10:26 AM

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

comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us

August 18, 2008

RE: Chattooga River Project Comments

Dear Sumter National Forest,

I am a long-time paddler, hiker, backpacker and general outdoor person who cares deeply about preserving the environment, as well as preserving the rights of EVERYONE to enjoy that environment EQUALLY. I live in Marietta, GA, and have been enjoying the Chattooga River Corridor since long before it became a Wild & Scenic River.

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 many years searching for a reason to limit paddling on the Chattooga and has found none. It is time to open the river to equal opportunity use by ALL groups, including boating. The EA is not a user capacity analysis and does not reference one. The AW appeal decision required a user capacity analysis. Where is it? None of the alternatives are 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 consider 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. 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, it will be an administrative burden for the agency, and it will, in fact, virtually ban all boating on the upper Chattooga.

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.

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, though I have little faith that they will influence what appears to be a pre-formed decision on the part of the USFS which will ultimately lead to more litigation, studies and waste of tax payer money in these times of budget shortfalls and falling revenue levels.

Sincerely,

Allen Hedden
2923 Piedmont Drive
Marietta, GA 30066