

## IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. Boundary of Area

It is recommended that the Chattooga River from Tugaloo Lake 49.6 miles upstream to a point near Cashiers, North Carolina and 7.3 miles of the West Fork of the Chattooga River be designated as a unit of the National Wild and Scenic River System.

The river corridor varies with topography to include all land between the ridges on either side of the river. The high ridges on either side make a logical and easily recognized boundary and act as a barrier to outside influences. Where ridges are less pronounced on the extreme upper headwaters and around Highway 28, the boundary includes sufficient "seen area" to protect the view as seen from the river.

On the narrow portions of the main river and the West Fork, dense tree-height vegetation along the riverbanks obscures the ridgetops on either side, except in the curves immediately ahead and behind. Even though much of the land between these ridges is not visible from the river's surface, these lands are considered a part of the river environment. They average less than one-fourth mile wide on either side of the river and include needed acreage for trails along the river. They are also needed to protect the river from noise, runoff, and other adverse influences that would directly affect the river if the lands between these ridges were developed or put to other uses.

The ridges on either side of the Chattooga make an effective barrier to noise, development and other non-compatible uses. The lands beyond these ridges are not considered a part of the river environment. Mountaintops can be seen beyond the proposed boundary in only a few cases. These few areas will not be included within the boundary, but are far enough away to be managed as management units within the multiple use plan with modified timber harvest practices to protect scenic views as seen from the river.

The recommended river corridor is shown on a map in the following section.

## Recommended Corridor

Chattooga River - to include 49.6 miles of the Chattooga River from 0.8 mile below Cashiers Lake (river mile 53.9) to Tugaloo Reservoir (river mile 4.3); a distance of 9.8 miles in North Carolina and 39.8 miles between Georgia and South Carolina. The boundary includes sufficient acreage to protect the river from all detrimental influences, averaging not more than 320 acres per mile.

West Fork Chattooga River - to include 7.3 miles of the West Fork in Georgia from its junction with the Chattooga River (Chattooga River mile 29.4; West Fork river mile 0.0) upstream to river mile 7.3 on Overflow Creek.

### B. Recommended Classification By Sections

The Chattooga River can be divided into six distinctive sections under the "Guidelines for Evaluating Wild, Scenic and Recreational River Areas Proposed for Inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System under Section 2, Public Law 90-542," agreed upon by the Departments of Agriculture and Interior. The West Fork is divided into two sections under these guidelines.

#### Section I - Scenic River Class

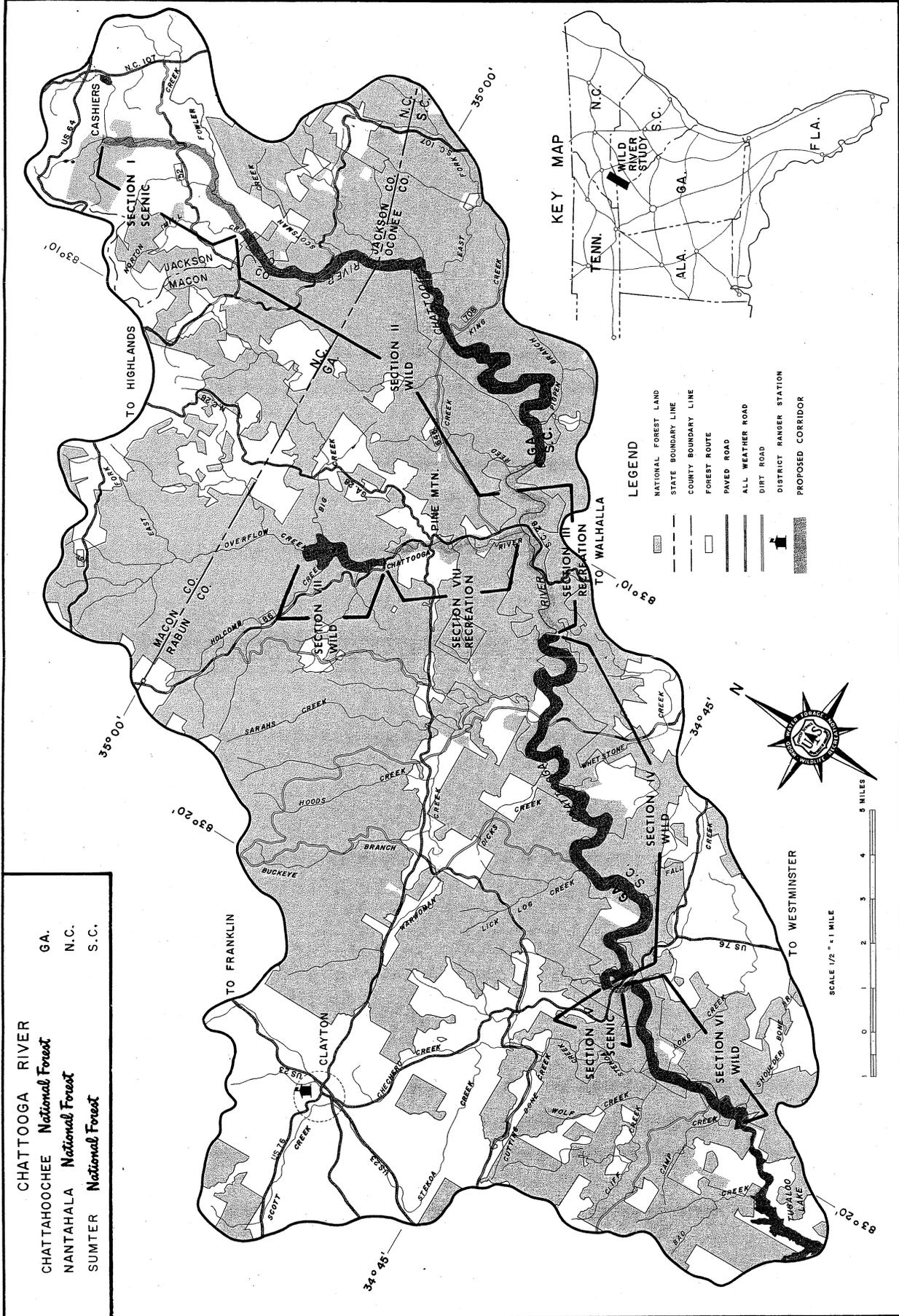
This section includes 5.5 miles of the headwaters of the Chattooga from 0.8 mile below Cashiers Lake to 0.2 mile above Norton Mill Creek.

Above this section, the Chattooga is only a small stream a few feet wide trickling off the Blue Ridge crest. It is too small to be considered a river and should not be included in the proposed corridor.

Section I, including Silver Slipper Falls and the Chattooga Cliffs, has the most scenic long range views and cascades on the river. Silver Slipper Falls drops steeply down the mountainside for over 150 feet, partially framing a view of nearby 2000 feet Whitesides Mountain with its sheer granite sides.

At the foot of the falls, the river plunges into dense forest for one-third mile, then turns eastward on a gentle slope through a young forest growing in abandoned fields. Past this, the river drops sharply for 75 feet through the narrow v-shaped

CHATTOOGA RIVER  
 CHATTAHOOCHEE National Forest GA.  
 NANTAHALA National Forest N.C.  
 SUMTER National Forest S.C.





rock walls of Ribbon Falls. A number of interesting swirl holes, several feet in diameter and four to ten feet deep have been cut vertically down the solid rock sides of this cascade. The river continues along a rapidly descending course through dense forest and over a continuous succession of rapids, cascades, and small waterfalls.

About one-half mile above Grimshawes Bridge, the river enters a valley with forested old fields and large open pastures. A barn and several summer homes are visible from the river. Grimshawes Bridge crossing is accessible by a country road. The section below the bridge can be floated by rubber raft and provides exciting trips over small rapids and cascades with frequent portages around difficult cascades and narrow sluices.

A woods road runs down to the river at Fowler Creek where evidence of past logging can be seen and a foot trail parallels the stream down to Greens Creek. Just above Greens Creek, the river crashes over a massive precipice and down 25 foot high Corkscrew Falls, the only major free-falling waterfall on the River. The west bank rises almost 50 feet above the falls, and the gradient of the riverbed becomes more moderate below the falls.

Further down river an old meadow and a log house can be observed on the north side. This is Monroe House, and its construction is of unusual pioneer architecture. The remains of an old chimney near this house marks the site of the earliest known settlement by white men in the Chattooga Gorge.

Section I of the Chattooga provides some of the most dramatic scenery found on the river. The stream is small and its banks are broken by occasional old fields and evidence of past land uses. Although a large part is undisturbed, the area of rural development, with farmhouses, summer homes and several old bridges scattered through the section make it suitable for Scenic River classification.

## Section II - Wild River Class

This section covers a distance of 15.9 miles beginning 0.2 mile above Norton Mill Creek and ending at the Nicholson Fields. Of this section, 4.3 miles are in North Carolina and 11.6 miles lie between Georgia and South Carolina.

This entire section is in a near natural condition. It includes some beautiful but hazardous whitewater. Enormous boulders, some over 50 feet high with trees on top, rise from the riverbed. This part of the river can be floated only in rubber rafts, and many dangerous portions must be portaged.

In the entire 15.9 miles, only two narrow bridges cross the river. These are Bull Pen Bridge and Burrells Ford Bridge. The stream averages 25 - 30 feet in width at the beginning of this section and drops on a generally steep gradient through whitewater cascades hemmed in by dense vegetation and high ridges. In many places, sheer rock outcrops and cliffs tower 400-600 feet above the river. The Chattooga Cliffs, a series of these outcrops 2800-3300 feet in elevation, continue for 2 1/2 miles down the river. Along the faster dropping portions, exposed boulders and steep slick rock walled sides make it difficult to climb out of the river bed to portage around dangerous cascades or other obstacles. In another place the river enters a narrowly enclosed rock canyon. Here the noise of the river is hushed and deep water flows slowly between sheer walls of solid rock rising 75 feet out of the water.

Rafting or some method of floating is the best way to see this rugged portion of the river. Many of the pools and canyon-enclosed sections are 10-20 feet deep and impossible to wade by hikers or fishermen. The sheer rock cliffs and dense vegetation on the steep ridge sides make hiking extremely difficult. Two-thirds of a day is required to raft the first 2 1/2 miles of this section and probably a hard, full day to hike it.

Bull Pen Bridge crosses the river in a narrow bend and is visible for only a couple of hundred feet up and down the river. This is a high steel bridge about 75 feet long which breaks out of dense woods to span the river above a small cascade. Bullpen Road is a Forest Service dirt road through National Forest lands. There are no houses or private lands within several miles of the river here.

The river turns sharply east at Bull Pen Bridge through a smooth flowing portion and then over a series of rapids, cascades and sluices broken up by long stretches of easy water. Here Scotsman Creek drops over a small waterfall and down a rock ledge into the river. High ridges continue to enclose the river, and at Ellicott's Rock the river leaves North Carolina to become the boundary between Georgia and South Carolina.

The East Fork joins the river below Ellicott's Rock. This is a small tributary, only 12 feet wide at its junction with the river. The lower five miles of the East Fork are relatively primitive, with a number of cascades and low waterfalls. This lower portion of the East Fork is in Ellicott's Rock Scenic Area. Directly above are the Walhalla Fish Hatchery and a recreation area straddling the stream. For the next two miles

the East Fork parallels Highway 107 within one-third mile, and at the North Carolina line it flows directly along the highway through cultivated land, abandoned fields and unattractive private developed land. The East Fork is not recommended for inclusion within the Wild and Scenic River boundary.

For the next 1 1/2 miles the river drops over 16 cascades and rapids separated by almost evenly spaced stretches of smooth water. At Burrells Ford a concrete Forest Service bridge crosses the river. A partially developed camping area is located near here on the South Carolina side of the river.

The eight mile section from Burrells Ford to Nicholson Fields is one of the most difficult portions of the river. This stretch includes exciting but treacherous whitewater. It flows around huge rocks and through narrow sluices and drops over 21 small waterfalls and rapids in less than two miles. Here the Chattooga enters Rock Gorge, the steepest part of the Chattooga River Gorge. Huge, house-size boulders constrict the river into a narrow channel with numerous falls and sluices. Below Licklog Creek the gradient is much easier and the steep ridges on either side begin to widen down to Nicholson Fields. This section is recommended for Wild River classification.

### Section III - Recreation River Class

Section III includes 6.1 miles of the river beginning at Nicholson Fields and ending at Turnhole. This section of river is entirely different from the gorge-enclosed section above it. The river above has crashed over 20 miles from its extreme headwaters down through the mountains averaging an 84 foot drop per mile. Here, the river abruptly changes into a smooth stream, flowing easily through progressively gentle slopes and an area of fields, farms and homes. This is the slowest flowing section on the entire river, dropping an average of only 12 feet per mile. It is shallow and easy for the inexperienced canoeist.

It begins at Nicholson Fields--a narrow and then widening series of fields--once farmed and now growing in planted pines. The river flows fairly fast but easily, with smooth water and occasional ripples. It continues through a narrow valley with many areas of flat land and fields adjacent to the river. Although the riverbank is lined with trees, evidence of farming is sensed from the river. This portion of the river is pleasantly pastoral with long views reaching to steep mountains in the background.

About one-half mile above Highway 28, the river enters a wide valley and for the next three miles flows slowly through an area of heavy development. Except for the short pastoral stretch near Grimshaws Bridge in North Carolina, this is the only section on the main river with farms, homes and a paralleling main highway in view from the river. There are two cabins immediately adjacent to, or within sight of, the river above State Highway 28 Bridge.

The open fields on each side of Highway 28 were once the site of Chattooga Old Town, a large Indian settlement destroyed by the Cherokees before 1600. Much of the land on both sides of the river here is cultivated. State Highway 28 crosses the Chattooga and then parallels it within 100-1000 feet for 1.8 miles on the South Carolina side. There are 22 houses and two mobile homes visible from the river. Below the bridge, most of these houses are crowded between the river and paralleling highway. A number of them are in a rundown condition, detracting from the aesthetic quality of this section of the river.

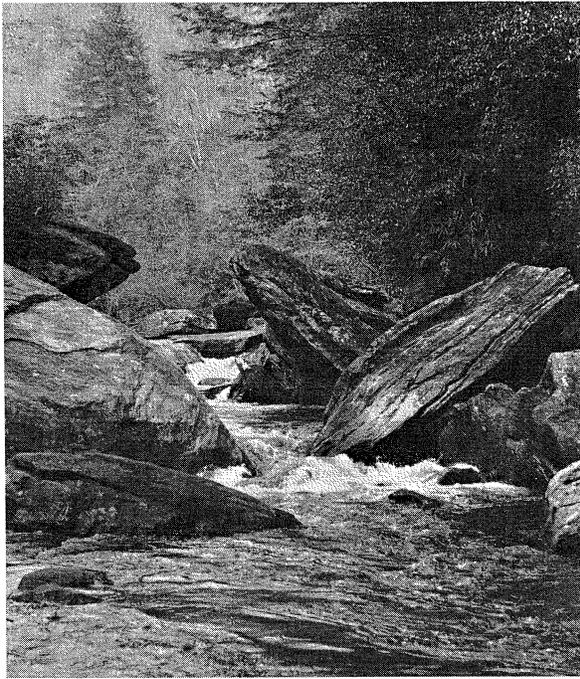
The West Fork of the Chattooga River joins the Chattooga just below Highway 28 Bridge, adding greatly to the volume of water. This is the largest tributary of the Chattooga. The river runs slowly here, with no sound of rapids. Vehicular traffic from the paralleling highway above creates a sound intrusion. Two miles below the bridge, Highway 28 leaves the river. Another hundred yards downriver a wooden, low-water bridge crosses the stream, with the last of the houses along the half-mile stretch below.

This 6.1 mile section of river is recommended for Recreation River classification.

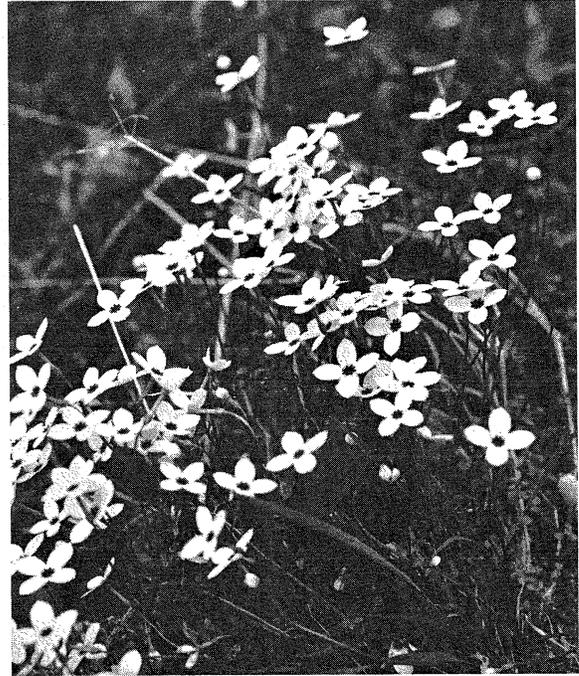
#### Section IV - Wild River Class

This section covers 15.0 miles of the river from Turnhole to Bull Sluice.

The river is 75 feet wide at the beginning of this section, flowing slowly between heavily wooded slopes. Just below Turnhole, it divides around a large island and drops over two easy rapids for a short smooth run to Big Shoals. Here it divides around a large boulder and drops down a five foot ledge through boiling whitewater. The next three miles are over easy rapids, around several islands and through a series of shallow rapids to Earls Ford where an old road comes to the river. An old Indian trail between the Cherokee villages of



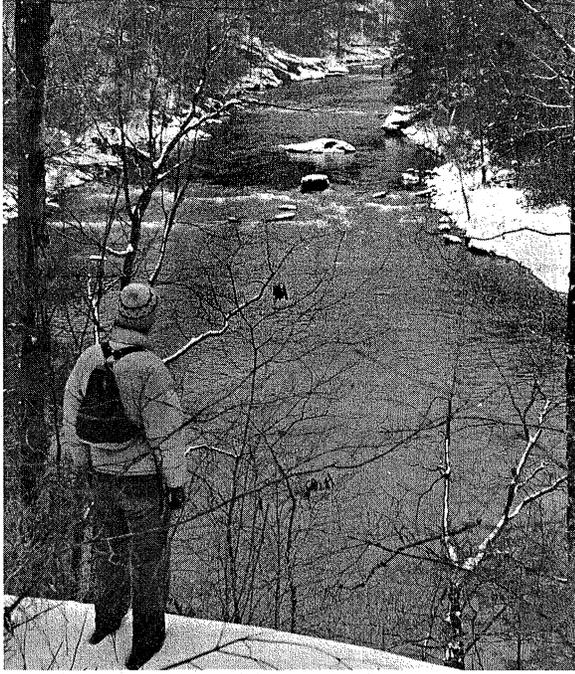
*Section II, Wild Class, above Bull Pen Bridge  
in North Carolina.*



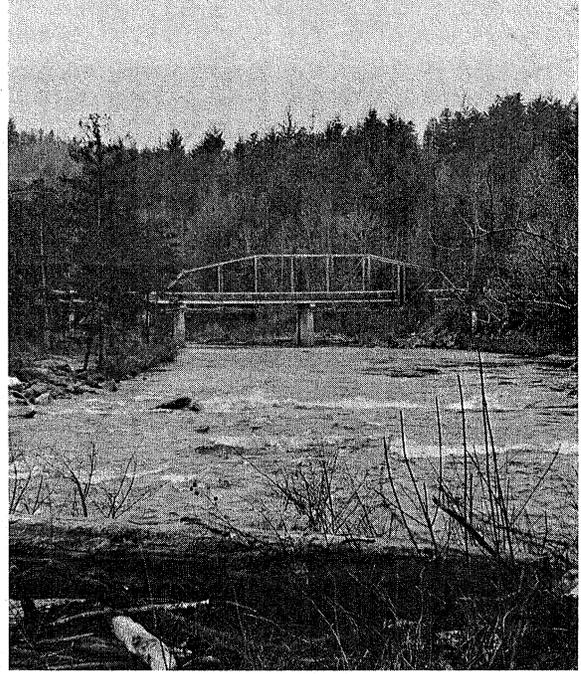
*Wildflowers are abundant along all sections  
of the river.*

*The calm waters of Section III, Recreation  
Class, attract many canoeists.*





*A winter hiker along Section IV, Wild Class.*



*An area of concentrated recreation use is near U.S. 76 bridge in Section V, Scenic Class.*

*Section VIII, with paralleling road, offers good access to the West Fork.*



Stekoa and Keowee once crossed the river near here. Warwoman Creek joins the river at this point, increasing the volume of water significantly. Below this point the degree of canoeing difficulty increases. The next 12 miles to Bull Sluice has been called the most beautiful stretch of whitewater in the Southeast--unexcelled for both scenery and canoeing water.

Leaving Earls Ford, steep ridges close in on the river as it drops over rapids, around boulders and down ledges. Six easy rapids in the next mile lead to the Rock Garden, where several rock slabs jut from the river and shoreline at a 45° angle, creating unusual rock formations.

The river continues over several difficult rapids and a stretch of turbulent water to Dicks Creek. Here Dicks Creek Falls cascades 50 feet down into the river. This is probably the most beautiful waterfall along the entire river. Travelers in canoes and rafts must portage around a 10 foot high falls in the main stream directly at the base of Dicks Creek Falls.

Below Dicks Creek, the river flows past a series of round-topped rocks and by two large islands to Sandy Ford. It then falls over some easy rapids and enters the Narrows. This is a long and difficult rapids where the stream narrows to a six foot width, pouring over several ledges in quick succession. Two hundred yards farther along, a steep ledge must be portaged. After a turbulent flume and several moderate rapids, the river enters a fairly calm one mile stretch.

For the next three miles to Bull Sluice, the river moves steadily over moderate shoals and rapids with several abrupt chutes. Bull Sluice, 300 yards above the U. S. High 76 Bridge, is an impassable 10 foot high falls that must be portaged.

This rugged and remote section of the river is recommended for Wild River classification.

#### Section V - Scenic River Class

This section is 1.0 mile of the river from just below Bull Sluice to 3/4 mile below U. S. Highway 76 Bridge. The remains of an old bridge, some evidence of sandmining, and a dirt access road to the water are located immediately adjacent to the highway bridge. Because of easy access this area attracts many visitors, especially fishermen, and is recommended for Scenic classification.

## Section VI - Wild River Class

This section covers the remaining 7.1 miles to Tugaloo Reservoir. Downstream from U. S. 76 Bridge, the river flows through undisturbed country with deeply forested ridges rising easily on either side. The river is over 200 feet wide here and flows smoothly with considerable volume around a succession of rocks and boulders protruding from the water and banks. Within the first mile, the river drops over nine steep rapids.

For the next mile to Woodall Shoals, the river has only two difficult rapids. At Woodall Shoals, the Chattooga twists sharply to the right around gigantic shoals and drops over an eight foot cascading falls and down twisting, turbulent rapids. The river narrows abruptly below Woodall Shoals and begins its final challenging run to Tugaloo Reservoir. This is the most difficult stretch of boiling whitewater on the Chattooga River, crashing between narrow canyon walls over a succession of steeply dropping ledges, rapids and shoals. In the first mile to Stekoa Creek, the river rushes over two dangerous cascades, a constant series of smaller, turbulent rapids, and through a narrow 1/2 mile long canyon enclosed by rock walls several hundred feet high.

No other stretch of the Chattooga can compare with the last 3.7 miles of the river with its 48 major rapids and cascades. It is rated by canoe experts as one of the most difficult stretches of whitewater in America, attempted only by the most expert or foolhardy canoeists and floaters. The river runs among huge boulders and through sheer rock-walled canyons. The wildness of the land and sheerness of the ridges and canyon walls make it nearly impossible to get out of the river once a floating party is launched. It flows through an impressive gorge with cliffs on the east side rising over 400 feet above the water level. Several tributaries enter by waterfalls, such as 60 foot high Long Creek Falls. Not far from the gorge the river is stilled in the quiet waters of Tugaloo Reservoir. This section is recommended for Wild River classification.

## Section VII - Wild River Class

This section includes a portion of the West Fork of the Chattooga and reaches from 1.3 miles above Three Forks on Overflow Creek to 0.1 mile above Overflow Bridge a distance of 3.3 miles.

The West Fork above Overflow Bridge is wild and inaccessible. Because of the extremely rough terrain and lack of access, at least one-half day is necessary to view this segment. The use of floating equipment is impractical. Three creeks join at Three Forks, about two miles above Overflow Bridge, to form the West Fork.

Holcomb Creek, the westernmost of the three, is a small, narrow, fast-flowing mountain stream. About one-half mile above Three Forks, it drops over a small waterfall and crashes down a narrow gorge, creating continuous whitewater. Cliffs rise vertically over 100 feet above the water on one side. Evidence of the great force of the water is seen in the numerous rock formations and round swirl holes cut into solid rock with auger-like precision. This stream has the appearance of a darkly shaded cataract hidden by cool, dense vegetation.

Overflow Creek is the middle stream of the Three Forks. It is a larger, wider and more smoothly flowing stream than either of the other two. Overflow averages 20 feet in width and is a rather open, sunlit stream that could be easily walked by fishermen. The stream includes a beautiful 25 foot waterfall that is one of the most spectacular single features of the West Fork.

Big Creek is similar in size to Holcomb Creek and drops swiftly in a series of waterfalls and fast flowing pools. For 100 yards above Three Forks, it flows in washboard fashion over a series of ledges tilted at about 30 degrees. The steep rocky sides of the stream and the dense vegetation along its shoreline make it difficult to climb out of the stream bed.

Holcomb and Big Creeks join Overflow Creek almost directly opposite each other at Three Forks. At the junction a number of prominent large rocks jut into the river and cliffs rise almost vertically from the river. The two mile section from Three Forks to Overflow Bridge can barely be floated by rubber raft. Lack of accessibility makes floating this section impractical. The river runs from 30-60 feet in width and contains water of every description, from easy stretches to rapids and narrow turbulent shoals. This part of the West Fork and the three creeks forming it are excellent trout streams. The West Fork above Overflow Bridge, including the last one-half mile of Holcomb and Big Creeks and the lower 1.3 miles of Overflow Creek, is recommended for Wild River classification.

### Section VIII - Recreation River Class

This section covers a distance of 4.0 miles, reaching from 0.1 mile above Overflow Bridge to the junction with the Chattooga River.

The West Fork below Overflow Bridge changes abruptly into a different kind of river. Its character changes from whitewater in primitive surroundings to a slow-moving gentle stream--suitable for the canoeing novice--in an area of moderate development. Overflow and Warwoman Bridges, several fishing cabins, and evidence of logging to the water's edge occur in the first 2.6 mile segment. Overflow Road parallels the stream closely. From Warwoman Bridge to the Chattooga, the river banks show heavy use and considerable erosion. Noise from traffic on the roads creates a distracting influence. The river banks are high, almost vertical, and generally block the view of surrounding fields and farm buildings from the water level. Several abandoned developments are in the lower reaches, including rusty sandmining equipment, steel tanks, an old splash dam and the remains of a low-water bridge.

Highway 28 closely parallels the river much of the way between Warwoman Road and the Chattooga. The eroded riverbanks throughout this segment have contributed a number of sand and silt deposits along the stream course.

The lower four mile section of the West Fork, from Overflow Bridge to the Chattooga is recommended for Recreation River classification.

Holcomb and Big Creeks join Overflow Creek almost directly opposite each other at Three Forks. At the junction a number of prominent large rocks jut into the river and cliffs rise almost vertically from the river. The two mile section from Three Forks to Overflow Bridge can barely be floated by rubber raft. Lack of accessibility makes floating this section impractical. The river runs from 30-60 feet in width and contains water of every description, from easy stretches to rapids and narrow turbulent shoals. This part of the West Fork and the three creeks forming it are excellent trout streams. The West Fork above Overflow Bridge, including the last one-half mile of Holcomb and Big Creeks and the lower 1.3 miles of Overflow Creek, is recommended for wild river classification.