

News Release

FMS 0717



For Immediate Release

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Forest Service Requests Public Input on Managing Recreation Uses on the Chattooga River

(Columbia, SC, August 14, 2007) U.S. Forest Service officials are requesting public input on six preliminary alternatives for future management of recreational uses on the upper section of the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River. The alternatives, included in the agency's scoping package that goes out today, cover a range of options from maintaining current management to introducing new boating use to managing encounters among existing users.

"These preliminary alternatives are based on data obtained during our visitor use capacity analysis and on information gathered during a series of public meetings and workshops over the last two years," said Sumter National Forest Supervisor Jerome Thomas. "Our proposals are intended to: protect and enhance the river's outstandingly remarkable values; offer a remote wilderness experience; preserve the scenery and setting of the river corridor; and protect the natural resources of the upper Chattooga."

The following is a summary of the key points of the six preliminary alternatives:

1. Maintain existing management: This is the current course of management and it allows boating below the Highway 28 bridge and places some limits on group sizes, trails and campsites;
2. This alternative's primary objective is to manage encounters. It introduces more stringent campsite restrictions, eliminates parking within the upper corridor and requires a permitting system if encounters reach three or more per day;
3. This alternative's primary objective is to manage biophysical impacts on natural resources by limiting trails, camp size, group size, parking and types of use (prohibition on boating would continue);
4. This alternative has two primary objectives: To manage biophysical impacts on natural resources and numbers of encounters between users by limiting trails, campsites, group size and

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parking and by establishing zone, season and flow limits on new boating opportunities. Boating would be allowed from just below the private lands in North Carolina to Bull Pen Bridge with group number and group size restrictions and from Bull Pen Bridge to Burrell's Ford with seasonal, flow, group and group size restrictions. It also introduces a self-registration system for all users;

5. This alternative has two primary objectives: To manage biophysical impacts on natural resources and numbers of encounters between users by limiting trails, campsites, group size and parking and by establishing zone and flow limits on new boating opportunities from Grimshawes Bridge and Lick Log Creek. It also introduces a self-registration system for all users;
6. This alternative's primary objectives are to manage biophysical impacts on natural resources and numbers of encounters between users by limiting trails, campsites, group size and parking and to provide new boating opportunities from Grimshawes Bridge to the Highway 28 Bridge.

“The public will notice some common themes throughout the alternatives. Efforts to manage biophysical impacts in the corridor and the potential introduction of a self-registration system for all users both have been recommended during our public meetings,” said Thomas. “If, after our environmental analysis and further input from the public, we determine that a self-registration system is needed, it would help us identify and monitor which types of users and how many are enjoying the river's offerings.”

The Forest Service is seeking input on potential environmental effects of the alternatives and on the range of alternatives. Detailed and precise comments are more helpful as we complete our environmental analysis, Thomas said.

Today's release of the scoping package, which includes a more detailed description of the six preliminary alternatives, marks the beginning of the National Environmental Protection Act, or NEPA, process. The scoping package can be obtained by visiting the Sumter National Forest website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/fms>. Hard copies of the package also are available upon request.

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Comments on the preliminary alternatives may be e-mailed to comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us or mailed to John Cleaves, U.S. Forest Service, 4931 Broad River Road, Columbia, SC 29212. All comments must be received no later than 4 PM on September 13, 2007. All submitted comments will become part of the project record and available for public review.

The Forest Service also will be holding an alternatives workshop on September 29, 2007. Location and time information will be available soon on the Forest's web site.

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