

Upper Chattooga River Visitor Capacity Analysis Data Collection Reports

The Forest Service is conducting a Visitor Capacity Analysis and is employing a modified “Limits of Acceptable Change” (LAC) planning framework for evaluating visitor use and potential impacts on the environment. Several types of information and analyses were needed as part of this analysis, as described in *Upper Chattooga River Visitor Capacity Analysis Implementation Plan for Data Collection Methods* (USFS, 2006). This document describes one element of those efforts, the ***Proxy River Information*** is a summary of management and flow related information for “similar-type” rivers to the Chattooga River as identified through public input.

A summary and integration of key findings from these collective efforts is provided in *Assessing Capacity and Conflict on the Upper Chattooga River* (CRC, 2007). Information from these efforts will be incorporated into the LAC effort to assess visitor capacity decisions on the Upper Chattooga. At the conclusion of the LAC effort, the Forest Service plans to develop a proposed action and alternatives for review through a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process prior to implementation.

This document is one of several describing methods and findings from the data collection efforts. It serves as one of several “supporting reports” to the *Capacity and Conflict Report*. The complete list of reports includes:

- ***Chattooga River History Project, Literature Review and Interview Summary*** (Tetra Tech, 2006) – a history of Chattooga recreation decision-making that documents the basis for the 1976 boating ban and similar issues in order to help frame issues in the current analysis.
- ***Capacities on other Wild and Scenic Rivers: seven case studies*** (Diedrich, 2007) - a review of capacity issues on seven W&S with similarities to issues on the Upper Chattooga. This report provides examples of how other planners have interpreted laws and mandates, conducted analyses, or arrived at capacity decisions on other rivers.
- ***Use Estimation Workshop Summary*** (Berger and CRC, 2007)– summary of workshop conducted with resource agency personnel to help consolidate and summarize use information by capitalizing on extensive agency knowledge as well as some existing user surveys and creel surveys.
- ***Limited Use Monitoring Summary*** (Berger, 2007) – summary of data collected through the use monitoring conducted by the public, Forest Service and contractor of vehicle counts within selected access locations along the Chattooga River Corridor.

- ***Literature Review Report*** (Louis Berger, 2007) – Literature review and summary of information from existing studies on the Chattooga or studies /planning from other similar settings; includes the following components:
 - ***Recreation-Related Social Impacts and Standards*** - information related to the relationships between use and impacts and the “evaluative side” of the social impacts issue, including which impacts are most important, tolerances for those impacts, and which management actions tend to be used and supported to address them.
 - ***Recreation Related Trail/Site Impacts*** - information about relationships between use and biophysical impacts, potential standards for those impacts, and the acceptability of management actions to address them.
 - ***Recreation-Related Wildlife Impacts*** - information about relationships between recreation use and wildlife impacts, potential standards for those impacts, and the acceptability of management actions to address them.
 - ***Recreation Related Flow Preferences*** - information about opportunities and flow preferences, particularly related to other rivers similar to the Chattooga.
- ***Proxy River Information*** (USFS 2007) – summary of management and flow related information for “similar-type” rivers to the Chattooga River as identified through public input.
- ***Biophysical Monitoring Information on the Chattooga River*** (USFS 2007) - information about current conditions in the corridor, including maps of existing trails, and a summary of other biophysical-related information that is relevant to Chattooga River capacity issues.
- ***Hydrology Issues on the Upper Chattooga River*** (USFS 2007) - This report summarizes recreation-relevant hydrology information for the upper river, including (1) rating curves and basin areas for staff gages at all bridges; (2) relationships between the Burrells Ford gage and the USGS Highway 76 gage; (3) summary hydrology for the period of record at the Highway 76 gage; and (4) extensions to the Burrells Ford gage.
- ***Expert Panel Field Assessment Report*** (Louis Berger, 2007) – report for the expert panel field assessment conducted to gather information about boating and angling opportunities on the upper Chattooga River, with particular attention to boater and angler flow preferences for these flow-dependent activities.

Introduction

The following list includes local rivers that might be similar to the Upper Chattooga based on the review of literature, guidebooks, websites, emails and interviews. Information was collected for the whitewater boating characteristics of each river as well as how some of these rivers are presently being managed. The whitewater boating characteristics are reflected in the table below. The Forest Service and Confluence Research and Consulting (CRC) talked to several individuals concerning the existing management on many of the rivers. The results of these discussions can be found in the report titled Capacity and Conflict on the Upper Chattooga River (CRC, 2007)

Summary of Whitewater Boating Characteristics for Proxy Rivers

(Source: American Whitewater. 2006 American Whitewater website, River Information, located at <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/River/view/>)

| River | Low end of Range (cfs) | High end of Range (cfs) | Class | Avg Gradient (fpm) |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| Big Creek, NC (Lower) | 1,200 | 2,700 | IV | 158 |
| Big Laurel Creek, NC | 250 | - | - | 50 |
| Big Sandy Creek, GA (Russell Fork) | 140 | 400 | II-III | 200 |
| Chattooga, SC (lower - 28-Earl's Ford) | 1 ft | 5 ft | II | - |
| Chattooga, SC (lower - Earl's Ford - Rt 76) | 1.2 ft | 3 ft | II-III+(IV) | - |
| Chattooga, SC (lower - Rt 76-Lake Tugaloo) | 0.9 ft | 2.5 ft | II-IV+(V) | 60 |
| Chattahoochee, GA | 100 | 2,500 | I-IV | 8-25 |
| Chauga, SC | - | - | I-IV | 20-150 |
| Cheoah, NC | 670 | 3,500 | IV | 83 |
| Chestatee, GA | 200-600 | - | I-IV | 10 - 50 |
| Conasauga, GA (Upper) | 300 | - | III-IV | 80 |
| Cranberry, WV | 3.5 ft - 4.5 ft | 5.5 ft | I-IV | 40-80 |
| Cullasaja, NC (Middle) | 4 ft | 5.5 ft | IV(V+) | 84 |
| Cumberland, TN (Big South Fork) | 500 | 1,000 | II+(IV) | - |
| Davidson, NC (upper) | 2 ft | - | III+(IV) | 120 |
| Deep Creek, NC | - | - | IV+ | - |
| Doe, TN (Gorge) | 350 | 2,000 | III-IV | 95 |
| Dutch Creek, NC | No Info | - | - | - |
| Elk River, NC (Twisting Falls) | - | - | IV-V(V+) | - |
| Encampment, WY (canyon) | 300 | 1,200 | II-V | 77 |
| Esopus, NY | - | - | II-IV(V) | - |
| Estatoe, SC (Rt. 178 to above Lake Keowee) | - | 3000 | IV-V | 230 |
| Eastatoe, SC (lower gorge) | 75 | | II-III(V) | 60 |
| French Broad, NC (Sect 9) | 700 | 3,500 | III-IV | 24 |
| Gauley, WV (Upper) | 400 | 5,000 | IV-V | 36 |
| Gauley, WV (Middle) | 500 | 5,000 | III+(IV) | 26 |
| Gauley, WV (Lower) | 1,000 | 5,000 | III-IV(V) | 26 |
| Green River (Narrows), NC | 90 | 160 | IV-V+ | 178 |
| Hazel Creek, NC | | | III-IV(V) | 100 |
| Hiwassee, TN/GA | - | - | III-IV | 32 |
| Howards Creek, NC | - | - | - | - |
| Jacks River, GA | - | - | II-V | 90 |
| Linville Gorge (downstream gage) | 200 | 700 | IV-V+ | 113 (200+) |

Table 6-1. Summary of Whitewater Boating Characteristics for Proxy Rivers
(cont.)

| River | Low end of Range (cfs) | High end of Range (cfs) | Class | Avg Gradient (fpm) |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| Little River, TN (lower) | 700 | 3,000 | III-IV+ | 70 |
| Little River, TN (Townsend) | 650 | 4,000 | II+(III) | 20 |
| Mill Creek, GA | - | - | III-V+ | 200 |
| Nantahala, NC (cascades) | 875 | 1,200 | IV-V | 210 |
| New River, NC/VA (sect 1&2) | 1,100-1,700 | | I-III | |
| New River Gorge, WV | -2 ft | 12 ft | III-IV(V) | 20 |
| Nolichucky, NC | 500 | 2,000(+) | III-IV | 31 |
| North Platte, WY (Lower Northgate Canyon) | 800 | 3 | I-III | - |
| Obed, TN (Obed Junction - Nemo) | 1,000 | 8,000 | II-IV | 30 |
| Oconee, SC (Hwy 11 - Little River) | 200 | - | II-III | 80 |
| Overflow Creek, GA | 225 | 600 | IV-V(V+) | 124 |
| Pigeon, NC (Dries) | 350 | 1,500 | IV-V | 63 |
| Rocky Broad, NC | 4 ft | 5.5 ft | IV-V | 132 |
| Saluda, SC (Middle Fork - sect 1 Gap Section) | 2,000 | - | III-V | 300 |
| Saluda, SC (Middle Fork- sect 2) | 275 | 500 | II-III(IV) | 40 |
| Scotts Creek, NC (North Fork) | - | - | III-IV(V) | - |
| Slickrock Creek | - | - | III-V | - |
| Tallulah, GA | 450 | 1,200 | IV-V | 231 |
| Tannasee Creek, NC | - | - | III-IV(V+) | - |
| Tellico, TN (Upper) | 250 | 1,000 | III-IV | 130 |
| Toccoa, GA | 350 | | I-II(III) | |
| Tuckaseegee, NC (East Fork, Upper) | 2 ft | 4 ft | IV-V | 110 |
| Tuckaseegee, NC (West Fork) | - | - | III-IV+(V) | 143 |
| Youghiogheny, MD (Upper) | 2.8 ft | 4 ft | IV-V | 52 |
| Watauga, NC (Watuga Gorge) | 150 | 650 | IV-V | 103 |
| Watauga, NC (Red Roof Run) | 200 | - | II-IV | 75 |
| Whitewater, NC/SC | - | - | IV-V+ | 138 |
| Wilson Creek, NC (Gorge) | 750 | - | III-IV+(V) | 95 |
| Wilson Creek, NC (Sect D) | 225 | 3,000 | I-II(III) | - |
| Wolf Creek, GA (Jones Mill Road to Hwy 5) | 550 | - | - | 56 |