

Alternative Local Streams Offer Sufficient Whitewater

The U.S. Forest Service has an opportunity to insure that the last protected stream in southern Appalachia does not join the pervasive monoculture of kayaking that has been methodically seizing control of every creek. The Chattooga headwaters have been a bastion for those backcountry enthusiasts seeking an alternative to those heavily boated Mountain creeks.

It took forty years for forest managers to realize the need to zone wilderness areas from the growth in motor boating and automobiles; this happened with the Wilderness Act in 1964. Prior to 1964, motor vehicles were slowly diminishing National Forest experiences for the backcountry users and diminishing the solitude sought after by many visitors. Like the pervasive motorized vehicles, the easier access resulting from kayaking again threatens the pursuits of backcountry enthusiast and the wilderness itself. Creek boating is considered an intrusive activity for the backcountry angler, wildlife viewer or hiker¹; Encounters would result in a diminished wilderness experience for these other visitors. Like mountain biking, it is time the USFS acknowledges and correctly classifies the differences between these users in ROS planning.

The 2003 Chattooga study published by American Rivers and the National Park service polled visitors on the lower Chattooga (below Hwy 28). Visitors were asked what they (95% boaters) would do if the lower Chattooga was not available that day. Ninety-five percent of the respondents had alternative places to kayak or other activities, only five percent of the polled would have “stayed home. This study did not include the upper Chattooga, which only would offer more opportunity for boating. The USFS already considers the Chattooga as “nationally recognized white-water” resource² without the addition of the headwaters.

There are many alternative floatable streams to the headwaters within a short drive from the Chattooga. Choices for Kayaking, or Creeking, is well established in the area with many other streams. The AW demanding to have the only protected public stream open to boating appears gluttonous. The USFS needs to protect the quickly fading alternative experience for all non-boating visitors.

The Chattooga River abuts Rabun County in Georgia and Oconee County in South Carolina. American Whitewater (AW) lists 132 runs in GA with 18 of them in Rabun County (see Appendix A). AW lists 92 runs in SC with 18 runs in Oconee County (see Appendix B).

In North Carolina the Chattooga is bordered by Macon County, Jackson County and is within a mile of Transylvania County. To minimize the AW list of 203 boatable NC runs we have listed 24 published runs of class III and above within a 50-mile radius of the Chattooga WSR. These runs are listed in Appendix C.

These alternative boating runs and creeks are some of the most cherished whitewater runs in the entire US. Many boaters already consider the Chattooga watershed a whitewater Mecca. Boater praise for these currently available whitewater runs are listed below.

1. **Chattooga Section III** “Imagine a place so breathtakingly beautiful that you would give up a day of paddling just to visit it. Now imagine that place with the best class III white water river in the southeast running through it.” “unspoiled” pg.88. *North Carolina Rivers and Creeks*, Davis, 2005 Brushy Mtn. Publishing.

“stunningly beautiful scenery and challenging whitewater” pg 61 *The Chattooga Wild and Scenic River*, Boyd 1998 Fern Creek Press.

2. **Chattooga Section IV**: “there is no feeling that compares to the increase of a paddlers heart rate when first passing under the 76 bridge and into the mysteries that await on this fabled section of the worlds most beautiful whitewater rivers.” pg.90. *North Carolina Rivers and Creeks*, Davis, 2005 Brushy Mountain. Publishing.

“If thundering whitewater is your goal, then section IV of the Chattooga is a close to heaven as you can come. Imposing sheer cliffs and splashing waterfalls enhance this wilderness experience setting, creating a magnificent destination for boaters. “Section IV is known around the world as one of the most beautiful exciting and challenging whitewater runs anywhere.” Pg 81 *The Chattooga Wild and Scenic River*, Boyd 1998 Fern Creek Press.

3. **Overflow Creek [AKA The Chattooga West Fork]**: “This super classic Chattoga tributary boasts incredible scenery, excellent but manageable class V drops and one of the richest histories of any southeastern creek.” After 30 years “overflow remains one of the best [creek] runs in the south.” pg.90. *North Carolina Rivers and Creeks*, Davis, 2005 Brushy Mountain. Publishing.

“A classic southern creek run...extremely beautiful” “The steep gradients are typical of southern creek runs” *Southern Fried Creeking*, Wayne Gentry 1992, Gentry video productions

An Overflow trip can be extended by continuing down the West fork to the lower Chattooga



¹ Sumter USFS “desired conditions” meting notes posted December 17 2005

² 2004 Sumter FS RMLP pg 3-9

The ability to run most of these listed creeks is highly dependent on rain fall; Most creeks, like the upper Chattooga, needing a significant storm system to render the creek “runable” by kayaks. Since the rainfall needed would be significant weather systems, all listed creeks would generally be available for floating simultaneously with the Chattooga Headwaters. Since these other public streams permit boating , all recreational opportunities for boating averse activities is consequently lost to kayaking during high-water times.

There are numerous floatable streams in Southern Appalachian; each with their own unique rapids, runs and scenery. What the foothills area is lacking is an

alternative to these boat-filled streams during high-water days. Without managing the resources appropriately advancements in kayaking will eventually encompass every drop of moving water. The slow displacement of other activities with the boating growth is visible on the lower Chattooga and the Nantahala, therefore continuation of the current protective restrictions is essential. The Upper Chattooga is the only local river that has both Wilderness and Wild & Scenic protective status; It also provides the last opportunity for the Sumter Forest Service to offer an alternative experience for visitors and wildlife that are less tolerant of boating.



50 Radius from Ellicott Rock

Appendix A: Rabun County, GA

No.	Name	Description	Class of Whitewater
1.	Big Creek -	<u>Highway 28 to Overflow Creek</u>	IV-V(V+)
2.	Chattooga -	<u>Section 3 - Earls Ford to Route 76 Bridge</u>	II-III+(IV)
3.	Chattooga	<u>Section 4 - Route 76 Bridge to Tugaloo Lake Boat Ramp</u>	II-IV+(V)
4.	Coleman -	<u>Coleman River Rd to Tallulah River</u>	V
5.	Darnell Creek	<u>Roadside along Darnell Creek Rd.</u>	III+(V+)
6.	Holcombe Crk	<u>FS Road 86B bridge to Three Forks of W.Fork Chattooga</u>	IV-V+
7.	Moccasin Crk	<u>W. Wildcat Rd to Lake Burton</u>	III-IV(V+)
8.	Overflow Crk	<u>USFS Road 86B to Overflow Creek Road Bridge</u>	IV-V(V+)
9.	Stekoa Creek	<u>1- Upper: Highway 23 to Rickman Airfield Road</u>	V
10.	Stekoa Creek	<u>2- Timber Bluff Road off US Route 76 to Chattooga River</u>	III-V
11.	Tallulah -	<u>1 - GA/NC State Line to Tate Branch Campground</u>	I-II(III)
12.	Tallulah -	<u>2 - Tate Branch Campground to Coleman River</u>	V
13.	Tallulah -	<u>3 - Coleman River Junction to Lake Burton</u>	II-III+
14.	Tallulah -	<u>4 - Middle - Old Hwy 441 to Tallulah Falls Lake</u>	II-III
15.	Tallulah -	<u>5 - Tallulah Gorge to Lake Tugaloo</u>	IV-V
16.	Tiger Creek -	<u>Lakemont to Tallulah River</u>	III
17.	Warwoman Creek	<u>Earl's Ford Road to Chattooga River</u>	II-III
18.	Wildcat Creek -	<u>W. Wildcat Rd. (Falls)</u>	II(IV)

Source of boatable creeks: <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/rivers/state/GA/>

Appendix B : Oconee County, SC

1.	Brasstown Creek -	<u>Brasstown Road to Yonah Lake</u>	V
2.	Cedar Creek -	<u>Blue Hole Falls to Cobbs Bridge Rd. (Chauga River)</u>	IV-V
3.	Chattooga River -	<u>Section 2 – Highway 28 Putin to Earl's Ford</u>	II
4.	Chattooga River –	<u>Section 3 - Earls Ford to Route 76 Bridge</u>	II-III+(IV)
5.	Chattooga River -	<u>Section 4 - Route 76 Bridge to Tugaloo Lake Boat Ramp</u>	II-IV+(V)
6.	Chattooga East Fork	<u>1: Hwy 107 to Walhalla Fish Hatchery</u>	IV
7.	Chauga River -	<u>1: Verner Mill Rd. to Blackwell Bridge</u>	II-III (IV)
8.	Chauga River -	<u>2: Route 193 to Route 290/Cassidy Bridge</u>	II-III (V)
9.	Chauga River -	<u>3: Route 290 /Cassidy Bridge Rd. to Cobbs Bridge Rd.</u>	IV
10.	Chauga River -	<u>4: Cobbs Bridge Rd. to N. Horseshoe Bridge Rd.</u>	I-II(III)
11.	Coneross Creek -	<u>SC 59 to Coneross Hydro Plant Park</u>	I II III
12.	Flat Shoal River -	<u>1: Hwy 11 to Flat Shoals Bridge</u>	I-III(IV)
13.	Flat Shoal River -	<u>2: Flat Shoals Bridge to Tanyard Bridge (SSR 37-24)</u>	I-III
14.	Flat Shoal River -	<u>3: Tanyard Bridge to Stamp Creek Access</u>	II
15.	Little River NF	<u>Highway 11 to Tanyard Bridge (SSR 37-24)</u>	I-III
16.	Oconee Creek -	<u>Hwy 11 to Little River</u>	II-III
17.	Snow Creek -	<u>Snow Creek Rd. to Lake Hartwell</u>	I-III
18.	Whetstone Creek -	<u>Sandy Ford Access Road to Sandy Ford</u>	II-III (V)

Source of boatable creeks: <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/rivers/state/SC/>

Appendix C

North Carolina Runs within 50 miles of the Chattooga river.

Distance from Chattooga	Name	Description	class
45	Big Hungry Creek	<u>Big Hungry Road to Green</u>	III-IV
25	Courthouse Creek	fall to 215	IV/V
15	Cullasaja	<u>Lake Sequoyah to Peeks Creek Bridge</u>	IV-V(V+)
30	Davidson	<u>1. Forest Service Road 475-A to Looking Glass Creek</u>	III+(IV)
20	Eastatoe		IV+
35	French Broad	<u>9. Barnard to Hot Springs</u>	III-IV
30	French Broad, East Fork	<u>East Fork Road at Laurel Branch to French Broad River</u>	II-IV
25	French Broad, N Fork	<u>Route 1326 Bridge to US Route 64 Bridge</u>	III-IV
30	French Broad, W Fork	<u>SR 1309 Bridge to US 64 Bridge</u>	IV-V
50	Green	<u>Narrows of the Green</u>	IV-V+
50	Green	<u>Summit Lake Dam to powerhouse</u>	III-V
10	Horsepasture	<u>US Route 281 to Lake Jocassee</u>	V+
45	Hungry River	<u>Big Hungry Road to Green River</u>	IV
65	Linville	<u>Linville Falls to Lake James</u>	IV-V+
33	Little (Fr.Broad trib)	<u>Base of Triple Falls to Hooker Falls</u>	III-IV
30	Looking Glass Creek	<u>Along Highway 278</u>	III-IV(V+)
40	Middle Creek	<u>NC 106 - Park and Huck</u>	III-IV(V+)
30	Nantahala	<u>1) Cascades: FS Road 327 to 1310 Bridge</u>	IV-V
30	Nantahala	<u>2. Route 1310 Bridge to Hwy. 19</u>	III
25	West Fork Pigeon	To 215	IV-V
30	Snowbird Creek	<u>Hooper Bald to Junction</u>	III-IV+
30	Snowbird Creek	<u>Junction to First Bridge Downstream</u>	III-IV
30	Tannasee Creek	<u>in Pisgah</u>	III-IV(V+)
35	Thompson	<u>N.C. Route 281 to Lake Jocassee</u>	IV-V+
15	Toxaway river	<u>Above Lake Toxaway</u>	IV-V+
15	Tuckasegee	<u>Section 0. Above Tanasee Creek Reservoir</u>	III-V
10	Tuckasegee, West Fork	<u>Thorpe Dam to Tuckasegee River</u>	III-IV+(V)
25	Whiteoak Creek	<u>through the Nantahala Cascades</u>	IV-V+
5	Whitewater River	<u>Bullpen Rd (SR 1103) off Hwy 107 to Hwy 281</u>	IV-V+
50	Wilson Creek	<u>to Brown Mtn Beach</u>	III-IV+(V)
40	Yellow Creek	<u>SR 1242 to Cheoah/ US 129</u>	IV-V

<http://www.americanwhitewater.org/rivers/state/NC/>



Written by Doug Adams, Mike Bamford and Tom McGinnus.