From: Bill Rivers
Reply To: billrivers@earthlink.net
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject: Chatooga boating regulations
Date: 07/19/2008 05:59 PM

As an avid white water and wilderness canoeist, I was shocked to hear that you are considering regulations allowing fishermen the use of the river but banning the paddling community (kayakers and canoeists along with rafters and tubers). Apparently fishermen want the river all to themselves and are trying to give the paddling community a bad name in order to influence you into discriminating against them?

While I can't blame fishermen for wanting such a beautiful natural resource all to themselves, it's hardly true that the paddling community would damage the river. In fact, most paddlers appreciate a pristine environment and most would not do anything to damage the environment. My understanding of public lands, resources, etc. is that it is for the general use of the entire public and that it is your responsibility to make it available to as many users as possible. Floating a boat over water is not a hazard to the health of the river. I could see restricting commercial outfitters to lower the risk of too many boaters on the water and restricting campsites, alcoholic beverages and the use of bottles and cans along the way to reduce some that would litter, etc. but preventing all users except fishermen is not the best course of action.

I believe that boaters and fishermen, along with bird watchers, hikers, horseback riders, etc. can all enjoy the river and it's surrounding lands without conflicts and in keeping with the preservation of the natural ecosystem.

Implementing such measures as are now being proposed could set an unreasonable and dangerous precedent for other areas of the nation and I believe this course of action is not based on reasonable thinking.

Bill