From: Mark Stover
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us; akimbell@fs.fed.us
Subject: Chattooga River management plan comments
Date: 07/22/2008 09:47 AM

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Mark Stover and I am a biology teacher from Weaverville, NC. I also am an avid whitewater paddler and I am writing with grave concerns about the recently published Environmental Assessment on recreation on the Chattooga. The current alternative offered is simply unacceptable for several reasons.

1. It is little more than a crumb offering, the reality of boating given the provisions in the EA still effectively maintain a boating ban.
2. Given the absurdly low number of boaters allowed and the 450cfs average daily flow trigger, boaters such as myself that travel long distances to boat in the Chattooga watershed are further hindered in using this public resource.
3. The EA prohibits boating to 6 possible days a year while not limiting in any way any other user group. WHY? This seems inequitable and unacceptable to single out one user group for exclusion from a public forest and Wild and Scenic waterway.
4. Floating on waterways that are National Wild and Scenic Rivers should not be prohibited regardless of who the landowners are along the river.
5. Paddlers prefer an alternative similar to Alternative 8 that: 1) allows full access to boating on the entire Chattooga River below Grimshawes Bridge, 2) allows paddling on tributaries, 3) includes encounter standards based on a real user capacity analysis, 4) will *equitably* limit *total* use only when encounter standards are consistently exceeded, and 5) will do so using all available indirect measures first.
6. Where's the user capacity analysis?

At a time when expenses are at an all time high in the government, it sickens me to think of the tax payers dollars (my dollars, your dollars, every working person's dollars) that are being wasted here to help maintain a ban that is illegal and immoral. Our Founding Fathers would be shocked at the way the federal government is behaving in this situation; alas, we no longer live in the free nation our Founding Fathers worked to create, but I digress.

There are many levels to argue against this ridiculous ban, but at its base we have this: the river levels required for boating in the upper reaches of the Chattooga watershed are going to be such that it certainly will not be safe or good conditions for swimming, wading, or fishing. By its very nature, the river will create the situation that will limit or prevent any significant user group conflicts that you may be concerned about. I can say in nearly a decade of whitewater paddling, I have never had a negative encounter with an angler on the river. It sickens me to think of the time wasted here arguing about this, when AW and TU should be teaming together like on other rivers in other parts of the country to help protect river resources. Given the condition of Stekoa, God only knows we need to be doing that here too, but that fight is for another day. Thank you for considering these comments.

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