From: BruceandJulie
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject: Alternative #4 comments
Date: 07/18/2008 05:34 PM

To Whom It May Concern:

I have read the study regarding the various proposed management alternatives. I commend you on a through and very impressive study. Of the alternatives, I would support Alternative #4 over the others as it seems to be the alternative that will stand up legally against lawsuits filed by boater groups because there is no outright ban on boating. However, I would like to make a comment regarding the concerns of the provisions that Alternative #4 makes.

1. Exactly how will the boating public be notified when boating is allowed on the river? According to the study, statistically there are on average 6 boatable days per year. How would this be enforced? How would the boaters know that the level of the river was high enough to make it legal to float? What would the penalties be for those who violated the provisions of this alternative?
2. I agree there should be no degradation to the stream ecology and food web by allowing the removal of large woody debris (LWD). What action would be taken if boaters remove LWD from the river? What actions would be taken against those removing LWD and the boating community? I have personally seen where boaters are currently illegally floating this section of the river. It would seem that some boaters get a thrill out of getting into their boat and sliding down the bank into the river. This creates areas that funnel water and promotes erosion of the river bank and concentrates drainage from the surrounding river bank. It also kills all vegetation where the boats slide down. What action would be taken should this continue? I know that politically, there should be no restrictions for users to an area. However, this is not truly the case. It has been shown that in some areas vehicles, horses and mountain bikes are not compatible with the ecologic and/or management requirements of an area. Wilderness and roadless areas come to mind. User conflicts aside and based on my personal observations where boaters are active, there is degradation of the environment. It is my opinion based on personal observation that the removal of Large Woody Debris and bank erosion are just two of the many problems that will occur if boating is allowed. It is difficult for me to see that there is much difference between removing trees and underbrush to build a road on the side of a hill and the removal of LWD in a stream to allow for navigation of boats. Even though the plan does not allow for the removal of LWD from the streams, the logic escapes me. It seems just as logical to open up a roadless area to ATV of ORV traffic in a roadless area and expect that the drivers of these vehicles will not clear paths to create trails or road as it is to open up a wilderness area stream to boating and not expect the boaters to remove obstacles in their path to facilitate a portage free float.
3. Crime has been an issue in the parking areas, specifically breaking into cars and theft of the car contents. Does it make sense to try to artificially restrict use of an area by reducing the number of parking spaces at that area? It seems to me that by reducing the amount of parking, people will park along side of the road creating more erosion and runoff problems than limiting the size of parking lots. Having adequate parking to suit the use of the area only makes sense as run off from the parking lot would be easier to control and policing of the parking lots should be easier than having cars spread out all along the highway. Having cars parked along the roads also creates a safety hazard to area users and passing traffic as well.
4. Restroom facilities --, I saw no mention of restroom facilities. It is not reasonable to assume that people will “hold it” while in this area. One kind of encounter that was not mentioned but is a reality is the encounter one has of a previous visitor’s remains. Regardless of what we say of “If you pack it in, pack it out”. That kind of debris is not going to be packed out by me or anyone else and will eventually end up in the river in its raw form. There should be some provision for the installation of some form of public restrooms and the USFS should have the ability to manage according to public use of various areas.

I greatly appreciate all the work and consideration that has been put into this study. It is impossible to satisfy all users but hopefully we can find a compromise that all can live with. I would like to hear how the concerns that I have stated above will be addressed. Personally, I would be glad to have this alternative succeed and have all this bickering and lawsuit slinging over and done with. It is my hope that the resources used for this program will not be wasted. If this alternative is approved, I can only hope that all sides abide by its directives and that those who do not are prohibited from future access to this most valuable and precious resource.

Sincerely,

Bruce Rickey

HOME ANALYST
APPRAISALS AND HOME INSPECTIONS

Home Analyst, Inc.
Bruce Rickey
Owner
Bruce@yourhomeanalyst.com
1682 Hampton Oaks Bend
Marietta, GA 30066
tel: 404-695-7121
mobile: 404-695-7121

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