From: Steve W
Sent By: covercrops@gmail.com
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject: Chattooga River Project Comments
Date: 07/17/2008 03:40 PM

Dear Sumter National Forest Managers,

I am an avid fisherman, canoeist, hiker, and kayaker who lives in South Carolina.

After reviewing the Environmental Assessment for recreational management of the Chattooga River, I disagree with your analysis and your proposal. As a boater, I feel that you are unfairly discriminating against this activity, while giving other activities free reign. As a boater and a fisherman, I understand both sides to this issue, and feel that is an opportunity for both stakeholders to be accomodated. Your proposal clearly does not treat boater equitably. Here is a point-by-point summary of why I feel this is the case:

- The USFS has spent thirteen years searching for a reason to limit paddling on the Chattooga and has found *none*. It is time to open the river to boating.
- The EA is not a user capacity analysis and does not reference one. The AW appeal decision required a user capacity analysis. Why have you not provided an EA?
- No alternative is acceptable because they all include boating bans on the upper Chattooga Cliffs reach and on tributaries – without any justification.
- The EA and preferred alternative are not equitable or protective of the river because they considers boating to be the only management variable, while other larger more impactful uses are not seriously considered for limits.
- The USFS preferred alternative includes a total ban on 2/3 of the upper river, a ban on tributary boating, and allows only 0-6 days of limited boating on the remaining reach – while allowing all other wilderness conforming existing uses in unlimited numbers.. This is not equitable and not acceptable!
- The EA offers no basis for the boating bans and limits
- The EA lacks a full range of alternatives
- The EA is no better or different than the last one, is at least a year late and has wasted millions in tax payer money
- The USFS hired qualified consultants and then ignored their input
- The 450 CFS average daily flow trigger in the preferred alternative is a flawed measure that should be eliminated from any considerations. There is no way a paddler can know this number and will be an administrative burden for the agency.
- Paddlers prefer an alternative similar to Alternative 8 that 1) fully allows 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.
- The public should have the right to float on public Wild and Scenic Rivers regardless of who owns the land along the river.
- All aspects of the "Outstanding Remarkable Values" of Wild and Scenic Rivers should be protected on the entire river, not just in some areas.

Thank you for considering these comments. Please consider conducting a user

capacity analysis and immediately allowing boating in the same numbers, places, and seasons that you allow existing users. Paddling should be allowed in a similar manner to your alternative number 8, but that alternative should be ammended to include the *entire* Upper Chattooga River and its tributaries.

Thank you for considering these comments,

Sincerely,

Steven A. Wagstaff
Columbia, SC