From: Ben Fleming
To: FS-comments-southern-francismarion-sumter
Subject: Chattooga River Boating Access
Date: Thursday, November 06, 2014 10:02:07 PM

I've been paddling on the Chattooga off and on since I was at summer camp in the 80's. As a member of American Whitewater, I support their positions on the EA.

1. We support the trail analysis and Forest Service proposal for trails in Alternative 2. High quality sustainable trails are good for forest visitors and the river.
2. The Forest Service does not need to require that paddlers use specific river access and egress points, but if they do, they should likewise require that all visitors seeking shore and water access use those same points.
3. The Environmental Assessment should be clear that it does not cover the section of the Upper Chattooga upstream of the Green Creek Trail, and that the resulting Paddling Permit should only be required for padlding downstream of Green Creek.

Thank you for your attention.
Sincerely,
Ben Fleming
35 Caledonia Rd.
Asheville, NC 28803

From:	Peter Hubbard
To:	FS-comments-southern-francismarion-sumter
Subject:	Chattooga River Boating Access
Date:	Thursday, November 06, 2014 5:16:30 PM

Please find below my comments regarding Chattooga (Georgia) River Boating Access:

Together with the organization American Whitewater, I support the following:

1. I support the trail analysis and Forest Service proposal for trails in Alternative 2. High quality sustainable trails are good for forest visitors and the river.
2. The Forest Service does not need to require that paddlers use specific river access and egress points, but if they do, they should likewise require that all visitors seeking shore and water access use those same points.
3. The Environmental Assessment should be clear that it does not cover the section of the Upper Chattooga upstream of the Green Creek Trail, and that the resulting Paddling Permit should only be required for paddling downstream of Green Creek.

Thank you.

--
Peter Hubbard
Resident of Alexandria, VA
571.501.0731
phubbard314@gmail.com

Chattooga River Boating Access

Tuesday, November 18, 2014
11:05 AM

Subject	**Chattooga River Boating Access**
From	Bill Floyd
To	FS-comments-southern-francismarion-sumter
Cc	wcbfloyd@ix.netcom.com
Sent	Wednesday, November 05, 2014 3:23 PM
Attachments	Floyd Comment...

Please see my attached comments regarding the Environmental Assessment and why the Forest Service should abandon any effort to construct new trails in the Chattooga Cliffs reach.

Thank you.

4110 Quail View Rd.
Charlotte, NC 28226-7956

November 5, 2014

Re: “Chattooga River Boating Access”

VIA E-MAIL

comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us

Comments on the September 2014 Environmental Assessment Re
Chattooga River Boating Access
C/O USDA Forest Service Chattooga Planning Team
4391 Broad River Road
Columbia, South Carolina 29212-3530

Ladies and Gentlemen:

These remarks and exhibits respond to the Forest Service’s request for comments on the Chattooga River Boating Access Environmental Assessment, which was published for the Nantahala National Forest in the publication of record, the Franklin Press, on October 8, 2014. These comments are timely filed in compliance with the Administrative Procedures Act.

Since 1978, I have frequently visited and enjoyed the esthetic sense of solitude and wilderness type scenery that characterizes the river from Ellicott Rock to the Greens Creek Cemetery off Whiteside Cove Road. Unlike the West Fork or Three Forks area in North Georgia, or all the other ragged out places on the river from Earls Ford to Woodall Shoals and beyond, this area of the Chattooga remains relatively pristine.

In order to prevent degradation of the esthetic, scenic and water quality associated with this part of the Chattooga River corridor, the Forest Service should abandon its ill-conceived proposal to build new trails for boaters. Such trails would be duplicative and over accommodating, as the existing Chattooga River trail already provides sufficient access for all recreational users.

The agency has not based its decision on a the relevant factors, has not articulated a rational connection between the facts found and the reasons for its decision made, and is making a clear error in judgment. There is no reason for constructing the proposed trails other than to cater to the litigious demands of the boating lobby.

Please incorporate my comments attached hereto to the administrative record. I would appreciate your adding my email address to your mailing list.

Sincerely,

Bill Floyd

William Floyd Comments on Chattooga River Boating Access Environmental Assessment: Emailed 11/5/2014

1) If the Forest Service proceeds with construction of the proposed new recreation trails in the upper Chattooga Cliffs reach, the Forest Service will do so by administrative sleight of hand and legal gymnastics while ignoring its responsibilities under the Wild And Scenic Rivers Act, ("WSRA") and the National Forest Management Act 16 U.S.C. §1600 et al.
2) Moving forward with the proposed Greens Creek trail and the proposed Bull Pen bridge trail would violate the Forest Service's protect and enhance responsibilities set forth in the Wild And Scenic Rivers Act. It would also violates the best scientific evidence standard of the Forest Management Rule adopted in March 2012. 36 CFR 219 et al.
3) Congress passed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act by announcing the following policy: "It is hereby declared ……that certain selected rivers ……with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, …..and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations." 16 U.S.C. §1271 (emphasis added).[1] In announcing this public policy purpose for Wild and Scenic Rivers designation, Congress offered this non-exhaustive list of the types of characteristics that would qualify as an outstandingly remarkable value or ORV. Rivers seeking designation as a Wild and Scenic River must possess at least one of these ORVs that can be cataloged at the time of designation. After designation as a Wild and Scenic River, the policy makes clear that these ORVs must be preserved and enhanced for the benefit of future generations---not just the current generation.
4) Congress also offered instructions how to manage these ORVs when they are in conflict. "Each component of the national wild and scenic rivers system shall be administered in such manner as to protect and enhance the values which caused it to be included in said system without, insofar as is consistent therewith, limiting other uses that do not substantially interfere with public use and enjoyment of these values. **In such administration primary emphasis shall be given to protecting its esthetic, scenic, historic, archeologic, and scientific features.** Management plans for any such component may establish varying degrees of intensity for its protection and development, based on the special attributes of the area." 16 U.S.C. §1281(a) (emphasis added).
5) Congress mandated that forest management plans must give prioritized emphasis to protecting and enhancing five special categories of ORVs: (1) esthetic, (2) scenic, (3) historic, (4) archeologic, and (5) scientific features of the river.

[1] Outstanding remarkable values are popularly referred to as ORVs.

6) Congress chose the imperative "shall" as opposed to the precatory word "may" or "should". This word choice demonstrates the Forest Service must develop management plans for Wild and Scenic Rivers that prioritize and elevate the protection and enhancement of these five enumerated categories of values.
7) In stark contrast, although listed in the policy declaration, the recreational ORV was specifically left out of this list of five ORVs to be prioritized for special enhancement and special protection by the Forest Service.
8) Hence, management of recreational uses (such as building boating put-in trails or infrastructure tailored to any particular recreational use) must remain subordinate in level of importance compared to the enhancement, preservation, and protection, of these five special categories of ORVs: (1) esthetic, (scenic) (3) historic, (4) archeologic, (5) scientific. This makes perfect sense. In contrast to recreational pursuits which may have other physical locations where they can be pursued, these five ORVs constitute the "special attributes" of the Chattooga. They constitute the unique physical flesh and bones, and soul of the river, which cannot be replaced or substituted if allowed to be broken or destroyed. Once these values are diminished or degraded they are gone forever. These values are both concrete and intangible. The true intended beneficiaries of this mandate to provide enhanced protection for these five types of ORVs are the future generations who would be denied the opportunity to appreciate and experience the esthetic, scenic, historic, archeologic and scientific features of the Chattooga if these five values were not prioritized and instead were allowed to be diminished or even destroyed while accommodating secondary values such as recreational hobbies.
9) In short, the Forest Service must not elevate the enhancement of recreational pursuits at the expense of these five categories of values. That makes sense. After all, the enabling statute was popularly named the Wild And Scenic Rivers Act, and not the Boater's Playground Act.
10) Whitewater paddling, in and of itself, does not fall within one of these five special categories of ORVs deserving of special protection. In fact, despite the boating lobby's claims, in July 2013, the South Carolina District Court made clear that whitewater paddling does not constitute an ORV in and of itself. Instead, the Court held that "…..contrary to American Whitewater's arguments, ….recreation, not whitewater floating, is the protected ORV and that fishing, whitewater canoeing, hiking, and camping are all ….types of recreation that can take place on the river." American Whitewater v. Tidwell, 959 F. Supp 2nd 839, 852 (D.S.C. July 30, 2013).
11) Under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Forest Service has neither the duty, nor the right, to construct and designate new recreational trails, including boater portage trails, on the Chattooga Cliffs reach if such actions will either directly or indirectly degrade or diminish any of these five specifically enumerated ORVs.
12) The statute does not speak about balancing recreational interests against these five special categories of ORVs. Rather, the statute makes clear that when the enhancement of a

recreational interest conflicts with or adversely impacts one of these five special categories, it is the recreational interest that must sacrifice----and not the other way around.

13) Water quality and the esthetic of solitude and wilderness are ORVs that must be enhanced and defended over all other competing ORVs, (including recreational ORVs). Unfortunately, if the Forest Service pushes forward this plan to build unnecessary new trails for boaters, it will be violating this mandate.
14) In its January 2102 Environmental Assessment (published to support its Finding of No Significant Impact in allowing boating on the Chattooga Cliffs reach), the Forest Service indicated that the state of North Carolina has responsibility for monitoring water quality in the Chattooga River. P. 261 Environmental Assessment, Managing Recreation Uses in the Upper Segment of the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River Corridor, (January 2012)(hereafter referred to as the "2012 EA'). The Forest Service went on to report, accurately, that per the North Carolina Division of Water Quality, the Chattooga River in North Carolina constitutes an outstanding resource water (ORW) with a supplemental classification of Class B trout water capable of supporting wild trout propagation. See P. 299 Environmental Assessment, Managing Recreation Uses in the Upper Segment of the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River Corridor, (January 2012)(hereafter referred to as the "2012 EA').
15) By referencing North Carolina's §305(b) report, the Forest Service implied that the water quality was excellent and not impaired in any way over its entire length in North Carolina.
16) In addressing the river's water quality in North Carolina, the Forest Service explained that "[u]nder the Clean Water Act, each state is required to publish a 305(b) report that summarizes water quality conditions for state waters. If the stream does not have high enough water quality to meet its designated beneficial uses, it is listed as not supporting or impaired based on the presence of certain pollutants. Streams that are not supporting their designated beneficial uses are added to the state's 303(d) list of impaired streams." P. 261 , Environmental Assessment, Managing Recreation Uses in the Upper Segment of the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River Corridor, (January 2012)(hereafter referred to as the "2012 EA').
17) Because the Chattooga did not appear on the 2010North Carolina §303(d) list, the Forest Service concluded that the North Carolina segment of the Chattooga was not impaired by either sediment or any other pollutant. Id. at p. 261. This assertion of water quality was based on a report that was already stale by two years by the time the 2012 EA was published. The Forest Service made this broad generalization even though it knew that sediment had been a pollutant of concern on the river in the past in various places. Id. at p.261.
18) More recently, in September 2014, the Forest Service published another Environmental Assessment. As before, the Forest Service concluded that the entire length of the river in

North Carolina is supporting its designated beneficial uses. It reached this conclusion because the Chattooga was not on the §303(d) list prepared two years earlier in 2012. See page 70, Environmental Assessment, Chattooga River Boating Access, (USFS September 26, 2014) (the "2014 Boater's Trail EA").

19) The Forest Service's willingness to make such broad characterization of the river's water quality is troubling because it was neither based on nor verified by any field research by the Forest Service. Instead the Forest Service relied solely on the general water quality classifications appended to the Chattooga by the North Carolina Division of Water Resources. [2]

20) This unquestioning reliance on North Carolina's §305(b) report is troubling because the Forest Service is required to apply the best science available in managing a Wild and Scenic River Corridor. 36 CFR §219.3. [3] The Forest Service has not employed the best science available in managing the Chattooga for water quality concerns---because it has not done any scientific investigation of the river's water quality to substantiate the validity of a report prepared by a North Carolina agency that has no responsibility for managing the resource.

21) The Chattooga Cliffs reach of the river flows though miles of wilderness like areas in North Carolina where the closest road is over a mile or more away from the river. A water quality technician seeking to take §305(b) samples over the entire length of the Chattooga Cliffs reach of the river would have to make multiple difficult hikes of at least a mile or more over mountainous terrain and a rugged trail just to reach the river. There is no logging road to facilitate the use of a vehicle. They would then have to wade up or down in the stream-bed for miles since the trail does not follow beside the river all the time. They would need to carry their equipment for taking samples under storm flow conditions. If asked, I fear the North Carolina agency that conducted these prior 305(b) surveys would have to acknowledge that budget and personnel constraints necessitated

[2] Water classifications are designations applied to surface water streams, lakes, etc. to define the best uses for the body of water (for example drinking water supply, fishing, swimming) and they carry with them an associated set of water quality standards that can be measured to determine if the designated uses are being protected. These water classifications have specific rules that regulate how certain activities may take place near to the water source (e.g. development, forestry, agriculture). Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW) must (1) be rated Excellent on the basis of biological and physical/chemical characteristics determined through special studies and monitoring of the water and (2) have one of the following outstanding resource characteristics: (i) outstanding fishery, (ii) high level of waterbased recreation, (iii) designation as a Wild and Scenic River, (iv) component of a state park or forest, or (v) constitutes a rare or endangered species habitat.

[3] The responsible official shall use the best available scientific information to inform the planning process required by this subpart. In doing so, the responsible official shall determine what information is the most accurate, reliable, and relevant to the issues being considered. The responsible official shall document how the best available scientific information was used to inform the assessment, the plan decision, and the monitoring program as required in §§ 219.6(a)(3) and 219.14(a)(4). Such documentation must: Identify what information was determined to be the best available scientific information, explain the basis for that determination, and explain how the information was applied to the issues considered. 36 CFR § 218.3 Role of science in planning

that it only take samples at those places where the river conveniently passed under public bridges crossing the river.

22) Without more detail about the quantity and types of water samples taken in compiling the §305(b) report on the Chattooga, the conditions under which such samples were taken (storm event or non storm event) and the precise locations where those samples were taken, it is difficult to understand how the Forest Service can assert that is has used the best science available in making this promise to the public. The Forest Service lacks any credible foundation for extrapolating that the entire length of the Chattooga river in North Carolina is free of impairment from excessive sediment, etc. The Forest Service might like to claim that the §305(b) report is sufficient and constitutes the best available science to render an opinion that neither sedimentation nor other pollutants have impaired or degraded the water quality and aquatic habitats of the Chattooga Cliffs reach.

23) While the Forest Service is free to consider North Carolina's §305(b) report as informative, it is neither entitled to rely on the state agency's work-product nor to substitute it for the Forest Service's responsibility to investigate and monitor the river's water quality through its own field research. This is the Forest Service's obligation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

24) Furthermore, excessive sedimentation has been occurring in the Chattooga Cliffs reach at the same time that the Forest Service has been promising the public that all is well with water quality on the Chattooga.

25) Please see the compilation of pictures that I took on October 31, 2014 attached as Exhibit A. These pictures document the excessive sedimentation occurring from Cane Creek all the way up to the proposed Greens Creek put-in.----sedimentation that I believe has accelerated by an order of magnitude over the last twelve to twenty four months.[4]

26) Just downstream of where the Forest Service proposes to build a new trail and boater put-in below Greens Creek, there is one place where the silt is approximately 18 inches deep. One of my pictures reflects this condition.

[4] While I am no biologist, I have been fishing on the Chattooga since 1978. I have waded the stream-bed of the Chattooga, many times, from Cane Creek north to Greens Creek. I have recently been on that stretch of the river in November 2013, May, 2014 and most recently October 31, 2014. Based on these years of familiarity and experience, I believe that over the last twelve months, the sediment being deposited into the upper headwaters of the river (in particular from Cane Creek up to Greens Creek) has accelerated by an order of magnitude in comparison to what I have seen in prior years. In more and more sections of that reach, the level of siltation has now reached a point that makes it impossible to see the rock riverbed anywhere within the width of its channel. This condition is present on many, many places on that part of the river. Silt is more than a foot thick in many places. Upstream undercuts in the stream wide rock shelves that previously would have provided hiding places and habitat for the wild brown trout fishery have been filled in with sediment like cement. The stream's bedform diversity is being degraded. The average width of the channel relative to the average depth of the water appears increasingly shallow because of this accelerated level of siltation. This river is sick.

27) Despite knowing in the past how sediment has been a perennial problem on the Chattooga's lower reaches in Georgia (resulting in litigation and periodic attempts to remedy that condition), as well as in the vicinity of Norton Mill Creek in North Carolina, the Forest Service has done little, if anything, to measure, monitor, or try to remediate the sedimentation that is taking place on the Chattooga Cliffs reach. Instead, it references the North Carolina §305(b) studies.

28) Despite being compelled under the forest management rule to use the best available science when considering Federal actions on national forests and despite its duty to protect and enhance the river's water quality under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, for whatever reason, the Forest Service has not seen fit to conduct any credible field sampling and analysis to refute what my pictures demonstrate: namely that the river's water quality is becoming impaired, if not already impaired, from excessive siltation.

29) To give additional context as to why this is troubling, the North Carolina's 2014 Draft 305(b) report reflects at least one Parameter of Interest, pertaining to at least one location on the Chattooga, exhibiting an integrated reporting category classification of 4t----which means that this parameter of interest exceeds the satisfactory criteria associated with that parameter of interest. To give additional context, an Integrated Reporting Category of 5 would require listing on the §303(d) list and the preparation of a TMDL plan. Despite the negative implications of this parameter of interest being present on the most recent 2014 Draft §305(b) report, the Forest Service makes no mention of it in the 2014 Boater's Trail EA. Draft 2014 Water Quality Assessment page 720 of 1069, downloaded from http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/wq/ps/mtu/assessment (November 2 2014). [5]

30) By promoting the recreational interests of boaters, while ignoring this obvious degradation of the river's water quality in the Chattooga Cliffs reach, the Forest Service fails to discharge its responsibilities under the law to protect and enhance the river's water quality.

31) The Forest Service has argued that trails and campsites are significant sources of sediment when there is too much bare ground exposed. Nevertheless, the Forest Service wants to build new trails, that are duplicative in purpose, and which can only serve to increase sediment run off, no matter how well the trails are constructed initially. It is irrational for the Forest Service to expect that these new trails will prove to be magical solutions to erosion or to claim that the Forest Service will be able to maintain these new trails to Forest Service specifications.

[5] The Water Quality Data Assessment conducted by NCDENR pursuant to the Section 305(b) of the Clean Water Act can only be as good as the number of samples taken, and the breadth of the geographic coverage that those samples represent for a given river. Based on a conversation I had with a water quality individual at NCDENR, more than likely, the 305(b) water samples will be taken from a place where a stream is situated close to a road. If samples for the Chattooga River were taken in this fashion, how can we presume that there would be any correlation between the results of the near road sample and samples taken from the remote Chattooga Cliffs reach which is over a mile away by trail from the nearest road. This illustrate the necessity of understanding where and how the samples were taken.

32) The facts on the ground demonstrate that the Forest Service cannot even monitor and maintain its existing designated trails within the Chattooga corridor. Personnel and resources are inadequate to do the job.
33) Consequently, the Forest Service must immediately set aside its plans to construct new trails for boaters. Instead, today, not months or years from now, the Forest Service must concentrate its limited resources and personnel to fixing existing trails and campsites to reduce any potential for further erosion from that inventoried source of pollution.
34) To be clear, the existing number of trails and campsites in the Chattooga Cliffs reach are de minimis.[6] They are not the fundamental source of this pollution. The larger quantities of sediment present, coupled with the brevity of time and the accelerated speed with which this sediment has choked the Chattooga Cliffs suggests another upstream source of sediment is driving this pollution. The Forest Service must find the source and reverse this trend.
35) Today, not months from now, the Forest Service must initiate ecological and sediment yield studies to determine how much this sediment is impacting the biological habitat quality, channel morphology, water chemistry, etc.
36) In January 2012, the Forest Service promised the public that its decision to allow boating on the Chattooga Cliffs reach, subsect to certain limiting conditions, would "protect the river's water quality." p. 6, Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (USFS, Janauary 2012). The Forest Service indicated that the decision to allow boating above Highway 28, subject to certain conditions, would "minimize impacts to soils, riparian areas and other biological values." Id. @ p. 6.
37) In January 2012, the Forest Service also promised to monitor , through direct survey, how aquatic habitats were being affected by the change initiated by amendment #22 to the Nantahala Land and Resource Management Plan. Id. at p. A-20. The Forest Service also acknowledged that the non-degradation standard requires it to "…. document baseline conditions, develop management objectives and establish a monitoring program …and **identify when management action is needed to protect values.** Environmental Assessment for Managing Recreation Uses in the Upper Segment of the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River Corridor at page 3 January 2012 (emphasis added).
38) The Forest Service has failed miserably to do what it promised.
39) The administrative record lacks any evidence that the Forest Service has made any effort to seriously look at how boating over the last two seasons has impacted the river. Such a report would have identified this sediment buildup. I am unaware of any report in the

[6] As a part of that administrative record, the Forest Service prepared a report referred to as Biophysical Monitoring Information on the Chattooga River (USFS 2007). This report counted and inventoried trails and campsites that the Forest Service suggested were the primary sources of siltation into the river. Most of these degraded trails and campsites were proximate to the river below Burrells Ford and not in the Chattooga Cliffs reach. The Forest Service then suggested that it would implement a plan to mitigate this degradation through repair and reinforcement or relocation or closure of degraded trails and campsites.

administrative record, based on recent field surveys, that evaluate or document the water quality or the current condition of the aquatic macro invertebrates and wild brown trout populations that are sensitive to the accelerated sedimentation that is occurring within the stream bed.[7] In other words the Forest Service has no baseline from which it can make intelligent evaluations about the current condition of the water quality in the Chattooga Cliffs reach or the biological condition of its ecosystems.

40) The level of siltation has now reached a point that makes it impossible to see the rock riverbed anywhere within the width of its channel. This condition is present in many, many places on the river. Silt is more than a foot thick in places. Upstream undercuts in the stream wide rock shelves that used to provide hiding places and habitat for the wild brown trout fishery have been filled in with sediment like cement. The stream's bedform diversity is being degraded while the average width of the channel relative to the average depth of the water appears increasingly shallow because of this accelerated level of siltation. This river is sick.

41) Before anything else is done to promote recreational interests that might exacerbate this sedimentation, the Forest Service must first remedy this serious problem. The Forest Service must conduct a sediment yield study to identify the source of the accelerated degradation and to determine if this sediment is causing physical and biological impairment to the Chattooga.

42) Given the highly visible nature of the sedimentation that is occurring, the Forest Service should be devoting its limited resources to monitoring the river, in real time, to identifying and quantifying with specificity the ongoing sources of excessive silt, and to stopping and remedying any damage being caused to the fragile ecosystems in the Chattooga Cliffs reach. Only then could the Forest Service try to assert that it is discharging its responsibilities under the non-degradation mandate of the Wild And Scenic Rivers Act.

43) Reams and reams of paper have been consumed by "experts" retained by the Forest Service to conclude that there is a need to reduce degradation being precipitated by user created trails and campsites on the Chattooga. I question if any of these hired experts ever bothered to go walk or wade the stream bed. The Forest Service's own statistics suggest that the damage being brought about by the accelerating volume of silt (from Cane Creek up to Greens Creek) is unlikely to have resulted from erosion of poorly constructed and undesignated user created trails and campsites on that reach of the river. According to the Forest Service's own 2007 survey of Biophysical Impacts, the amount of user created trails and campsites on that section of the Chattooga is de minimis.[8]

[7] Such research data and summary reports are limited to 2007-2008-2009---too old to be relevant to gauge the impact of the sedimentation today.

[8] Table 1 of that study indicated that the Chattooga Cliffs Reach had only 360 linear feet of undesignated user created trails within 20 feet of the river and Table 3 of that study demonstrated that there was only 1 undesignated campsite within 20 feet of the river. In contrast, in that portion of the river proximate to Earl's Ford down to Woodall Shoals, this study tabulated the number of user created campsites (12) and 8,344 linear feet of user created

44) The Forest Service has spent considerable time and monetary resources to study the number of boaters that might be able to use the upper Chattooga without causing a resource capacity problem---a study largely dependent on broad generalizations and assumptions built on self-reporting by boaters. In contrast, the Forest Service cannot produce scientific monitoring reports to document actual trends in the physical condition of the river measured in terms of stream temperatures or pH or the amount of fine silt found in the upper Chattooga over the last decade.

45) The administrative record is missing any official report documenting prior or current fish sampling counts by electrical shock to establish population trends. The record lacks any scientific monitoring report on the quantity of newly spawned or less than one year old wild brown trout to ascertain how well wild brown trout are reproducing on that part of the river. The failure to publish such monitoring trends, if they even exist, makes it impossible for the Forest Service to refute what a layperson, with any familiarity of the river, can see for themselves: significant ecological degradation appears to be occurring on the upper Chattooga river.

46) The Forest Service has not addressed the critical threat that this excessive siltation poses to the aquatic invertebrates and naturally reproducing population of wild brown trout on this part of the Chattooga. Instead the Forest Service has blindly relied on NCDENR's §305(b) sampling report to assert that all is well---when our eyes tell us something different.

47) The public has not been adequately informed of the impacts of the proposed new trails by either the 2012 EA or the current 2014 Boaters Trail EA. These proposed trails were not legally approved as part of the changes to the Chattooga river land use management plan. Furthermore, the South Carolina District Court did not opine on the appropriateness or legality of building new trails specifically designed to benefit boaters at the expense of the five ORVs specifically enumerated as deserving of special protection and enhancement.

48) Since the January 2012 EA was published, in addition to the excessive siltation that has occurred, numerous old growth hemlocks have died and fallen into the river off the steep slopes along the river—especially in the area from the confluence of Cane Creek up to Greens Creek. Some of these fallen hemlocks have created dangerous stream wide strainers that will make this section of the river even more dangerous to boaters during qualifying high water flows. This problem of hemlocks falling into the river is particularly relevant to the Forest Service's proposal to build a new trail and put-in proximate to Greens Creek.

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trails within 20 feet of the river. The esthetic and scenic degradation proximate to Earl's Ford and Woodall Shoals is remarkable as an illustration of how not to manage a Wild and Scenic River. See Biophysical Monitoring Information on the Chattooga River, prepared by USFS 2007 with results synthesized into the Assessing Capacity and Conflict on the Upper Chattooga River (CRC, 2007). Downloaded from http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/scnfs/landmanagement/planning/?cid=fsbdev3_037424 November 2, 2014.

49) Please see Exhibit B, a compilation of pictures documenting the presence of a stream wide logjam (more than six feet tall) that is located just minutes downstream of the proposed boater put-in proximate to Greens Creek. Please note that significant silt is being trapped upstream from this logjam. When these pictures were taken on October 31, 2014, the Burrells Ford gauge reported average flows at approximately 84 cubic feet per second (CFS) and .94 feet height on the gauge.

50) These pictures demonstrate that when waters are high enough to lawfully boat (>350CFS), boaters are likely to have to portage around this logjam to avoid getting pinned. The riparian areas on both sides of the river are heavily choked with thick rhododendron and laurel, etc. that grow right down to the water's edge. It is clear that attempts to portage on either side of this logjam (with boats) will disturb these woody shrubs that are attempting to hold the river's banks together. There is evidence, on river right, that this portaging may have already occurred at some point in the recent past. The associated foot traffic and trampling of a user created portage path can be reasonably foreseen and the consequences of this are obvious: it will create an additional source of erosion and silt to the river. This must not be allowed to occur.

51) Furthermore, given this logjam is located just minutes downstream from the proposed boater put-in below Greens Creek, why would the Forest Service agree to designate Greens Creek as the starting point for boaters when boaters are going to have to evacuate the river at this first logjam just minutes after putting in? This need to portage via a user created trail in the riparian area of the river will cause significant degradation within the riparian area on either side of the river.

52) Boaters will want to cut/saw out these large woody strainers in order to partially or fully remove these obstructions to boating. It is foreseeable that this will happen, either with or without the Forest Service's approval. The Forest Service has previously admitted that unapproved removal of LWD has already taken place in the Overflow, Holcomb Creek and West Fork portions of the Chattooga.

53) By proposing a boater put-in just above this logjam the Forest Service implies that it intends to approve the boater's removal of this large wood debris (LWD). Alternatively, the Forest Service implies that it is giving boaters "wink, wink, nod " approval by virtue of the Forest Service's unwillingness/incapacity to enforce its own rules on this remote section of the river. The removal of this logjam would release substantial amounts of currently trapped siltation to who knows what adverse result. This must not be allowed.

54) Furthermore, there is an even larger, much taller, stream wide logjam located on the river just above where Cane Creek comes in. It poses even greater dynamic risk to the river if it were to be suddenly cut out. But this is what is likely to occur in those areas that are so remote that they cannot be actively monitored without wading up or down the streambed.

55) Exhibit C contains pictures taken October 31, 2014 that evidence prior and recent LWD removal by sawing, cutting or hacking by human hands, both proximate to the proposed put-in, and shortly downstream but above this first stream wide logjam. This of course is

in violation of the Forest Service's condition for allowing boating on this part of the river—which prohibits LWD removal. Of course, the willingness of the Forest Service to move forward with this new trails proposal in the face of this evidence demonstrates the pretense and arbitrariness of the Forest Service's proposal for constructing a new trail and put-in below Greens Creek.

56) Facilitating the removal of natural downfalls in order to tailor the river environs to accommodate boaters is not what Congress intended in legislating the Wild And Scenic Rivers Act. The river's environs are supposed to be preserved in their natural state, as they existed when the river received designation and as Mother Nature sees fit to shape it in the future---especially since these LWD may be serving critical in-stream biological functions that may help offset some of the degradation of excessive siltation and the loss of the shade canopy of these evergreens.

57) Furthermore, the proposed construction of new trails at Greens Creek and below Bull Pen Bridge will only benefit boaters, and will only serve to exacerbate the water quality degradation that the Forest Service is ignoring---no matter how well such new trails are originally constructed. They will encourage a spiderweb of user created trails by a variety of users. Look at the condition of the environment in proximity to Earl's Ford and Woodall Shoals to see what is reasonably foreseeable in the future for the upper Chattooga. The unintended consequence of building these new trails will be to import the terrible conditions on the lower Chattooga to the upper Chattooga. Despite this reasonably foreseeable consequence, the Forest Service will never admit that the lower river's degradation has been precipitated by the presence of commercial boating. Instead, the Forest Service will continue to argue that conditions on the lower Chattooga are irrelevant and beyond the scope of the current evaluation.

58) Please see Exhibit D, a compilation of pictures of Earl's Ford and Woodall Shoals taken in 2011. Exhibit D documents the Forest Service's failures in addressing the degradation occurring on the lower reaches of the Chattooga. Go look at the physical condition of the riverbanks on those reaches of the river. Count the length and condition of user created trails in those reaches. Look at the trash littered along the "highway" like trails that the Forest Service has designed and constructed specifically for boaters at Woodall Shoals and Earl's Ford. The upper Chattooga simply cannot be allowed to suffer the same fate as the lower Chattooga.

59) In connection with its 2012 Rationale For The Decision, the Forest Service trumpeted its efforts to conduct a careful balancing act. The Forest Service asserted that the future designation of permanent boater put-ins and take-outs would mitigate potential conflict between boaters and other users seeking a solitude experience. Specifically, the Forest Service stated: "The appropriate district ranger will designate the specific put-in and takeout locations after site-specific NEPA analysis is completed. **Like other users, boaters will be encouraged to use system trails to access these points."** 2012 Rationale For The Decision at page 5, (**emphasis added**).

60) These representations suggested that boaters would be using the existing designated Chattooga River trail to gain access to the "to be designated" take-outs and put-ins on the river, just like all the other hikers, swimmers, birders, etc. do. There was no indication that the Forest Service intended to build boaters their own special trail, to tailor make the environment to allow boaters to avoid having to hike so far from the trailhead near Greens Creek cemetery to reach the boat lobby's chosen place to put-in.
61) Contrary to the Forest Service's claims, the proposed Greens Creek access trail will not benefit other hikers, swimmers or naturalists. The proposed Greens Creek trail dead ends at the proposed put-in on the Chattooga. Hikers can't continue hiking downstream because there is no riverside trail, and they can't hike upstream because they would be trespassing on private property, even if there were a trail.
62) Nevertheless, if the Greens Creek trail is constructed, an unintended consequence will occur. Because the proposed trail will dead end at the river, this will encourage non-boating recreational users, over time, to create another undesignated trail downstream along the bank of the river---in order to avoid retracing their steps and in order to short cut the existing Chattooga River trail which runs much further up on the steep, steep ridge.
63) The Forest Service's stated purpose is pretense and the adverse environmental impacts are foreseeable. The Forest Service explanation for undertaking this Federal action simply do not square with the facts on the ground. Hence it will be arbitrary should the Forest Service decide to go forward with its proposal.
64) The existing Chattooga River trail affords boaters with multiple access points to the upper Chattooga at locations well above the interesting point where the Narrows dumps into Norton Mill Creek pool. There is nothing remarkable in terms of whitewater above the Narrows but below Greens Creek. In fact, as discussed, there is a logjam minutes below the proposed boater put-in at Greens Creek. Consequently, boaters would not be unfairly inconvenienced by being required to use the existing Chattooga River trail.
65) The Forest Service acknowledged in its own arguments to the South Carolina District Court and the Court explicitly agreed that the Administrative Record contains ample evidence that whitewater paddling interferes with the outstandingly remarkable values of the Headwaters. American Whitewater v. Tidwell at 853. Nevertheless, the Forest Service now proposes new access trails on the upper Chattooga that will benefit only boaters, while insisting that such trails are not inconsistent with its Congressional mandate to design management plans that prioritize "protecting its esthetic, scenic, historic, archeologic, and scientific features" for all users. 16 U.S.C. § 1281(a).
66) Nothing could be further from the truth.
67) By tailor making new trails to accommodate the boater constituency, and trying to shorten the distance that boaters must hike to reach the river, the Forest Service encourages more intense use of the resource by less passionate but perhaps more curious front-country users who would not normally venture beyond the existing trail. The Forest

Service would have us believe that the new trails are needed (1) to minimize the potential for conflict between boaters and (2) that the new trails will be beneficial to all recreational users of the river. Unfortunately, such claims contradict the Forest Service's prior arguments made elsewhere in the administrative record. The Forest Service has insisted the minimal use by boaters during the winter at high water conditions (when hikers and anglers are presumed to be in hibernation) will self-regulate and minimize the likelihood of conflicts and contacts between these different users. Hence, there is no need for new trails to avoid conflicts. How many complaints has the Forest Service received about undesirable interactions between boaters and other users? I'll bet that the Forest Service won't admit to a single complaint.

68) Other users have never asked for additional trail access. In fact, the record shows that other users do not wish any additional trails be created to grant easier access to the river for boaters or anybody else. While a Court might defer to the judgment of the Forest Service, the Chattooga River Trail which runs from Greens Creek Cemetery to Bull Pen Bridge offers excellent access to the river at multiple points where the trail touches the river. This is the same trail used by many recreationalists for many years since the Chattooga was designated as a Wild And Scenic River. Boaters have already successfully used this trail for several boating seasons to pursue their hobby. It is only now that the Forest Service arbitrarily announces that they are insufficient and in need of further expansion.

69) The proposed new trails will be built to accommodate the wish list of boaters and not to avoid conflicts and not to make things better for all resource users. By prioritizing the requests of the boating lobby at the expense of the specifically prioritized ORVs of esthetic and scenic considerations, the Forest Service acts arbitrarily and contrary to the facts as they exist. There is no need to construct boating access to Green Creek so as to provide boaters with only a marginal benefit at a significant cost for all other users of the river----other users who have expressed no interest in new trails. Boaters already have sufficient access to acceptable river put-ins via the existing Chattooga River trail. It only takes about thirty-five minutes to reach the banks of the river, in a long flat stretch of the river, if you depart from the parking lot proximate to the Greens Creek cemetery and use the existing Chattooga River trail. Somewhere here could easily be used as the upper most put-in. Such a put-in would still be well up river from the interesting and scenic Chattooga cliffs as well as the famous river Narrows above Norton Mill Creek pool. Boaters would only bypass a short section of the river, which is blocked by at least on stream wide logjam, and which is not characterized by any remarkable whitewater spots. Of course, if boaters wish to see the scenery in the bypassed area, they can do what others do and wade up and down the streambed.

70) Even if new access trails were justified as being of some benefit to multiple users, and they aren't, there is a much more logical location for a new put-in/take-out trail that

would minimize adverse impacts while providing benefits to multiple constituencies. This would be at Cane Creek.

71) By putting in at a Cane Creek location, this would eliminate the need to portage both of the significant logjams that exist above Cane Creek. This would prevent degradation in the riparian area caused by boaters need to portage.

72) The use of a Cane Creek designated put-in would mean boaters could not float the Narrows down into Norton Mill Creek pool. But they could still enjoy the scenery by just hiking the Chattooga River trail.

73) I am concerned that the second, much larger logjam, that exists upstream from Cane Creek but downstream of Norton Mill Creek pool, has the potential for being quietly dismantled one stick of wood at a time. The rock grotto that lies just below the logjam and above Cane Creek is probably just too tempting for boaters to leave this second logjam alone which blocks its entrance. Boaters have already indicated their willingness to drag their boats over the top of this logjam. There is a huge amount of silt trapped in front of this logjam. If it were to be removed without this silt being addressed, the release of this silt downstream will have unquantified but definitely adverse consequences on the river.

74) Unfortunately, the 2014 Boater's Trail EA refused to fully develop the Cane Creek option as a less intrusive alternative to the proposed Greens Creek trail. The Forest Service's cursory explanation for failing to consider the details of a Cane Creek trail runs counter to the evidence. This demonstrates the Forest Service had its mind made up and that its decision making process was both arbitrary and capricious in selecting Alternative 2 in the 2014 Boater's Trail EA.

75) The 2014 Boater's Trail EA states that using Cane Creek instead of Greens Creek was not evaluated in detail because it "would have been more difficult since it is in a steeper section of the river corridor…..This trail would result in more environmental impacts and public safety concerns than the proposed Greens Creek trail." 2014 Boater's Trail EA 2 page 17.

76) Unfortunately, these self-serving and conclusory statements do not detail why or how Cane Creek would cause greater environmental impacts or why it would entail elevated safety concerns when compared to the proposed Greens Creek trail. In fact, all these assertions are wrong and do not square with the facts as they exist on the ground. Cane Creek would by-pass the dangerous logjam just south of Greens Creek as well as the even larger log jam that exists just north of Cane Creek. This would enhance the safety of boaters.

77) An existing Forest Service road tracks to the west/southwest of Cane Creek. This road begins on Whiteside Cove road. I have walked this road many times. It has a gentle grade and is mowed. This Forest Service road is gated but is in excellent condition and is already used by Forest Service vehicles, tractors and mowers, etc. In the event of a boating emergency, this road would afford the Cashiers/Glenville rescue squad vehicle

access to within approximately a quarter mile of the river. A quick glance at a topo map confirms that the contours on both sides of Cane Creek are farther apart and that a connecting trail could be constructed on an area that would be less steep than the contours immediate to the area proposed for the new trail to be built at Greens Creek. This foot path could run parallel to the existing contours. A Cane Creek put-in/take-out would result in fewer adverse impacts to the esthetics of solitude and scenery for people who wish to avoid interaction with boaters in the uppermost part of the Chattooga headwaters and along the trail.

78) The Cane Creek Forest Service road could be easily connected to the Chattooga River trail by constructing a short section of footpath trail that could cross over Cane Creek, via wooden bridge, to the north side of Cane Creek, just before the confluence of Holly Branch on the west/southwest side of Cane Creek. This foot trail could then be constructed to follow the gentle contours around the bottom of the ridge to meet up with the existing Chattooga River trail at a point just north of where it crosses Cane Creek. The length of the foot trail that would need to be built would actually be shorter than the proposed Greens Creek trail. Also, the total distance that boaters would have to hump with their boats from the trailhead on Whiteside Cove road down to Cane Creek would be less than the distance that they would have to hike were they required to continue using the existing Chattooga River trail via the trailhead located below Greens Creek cemetery.

79) Finally, unlike the Greens Creek alternative, a Cane Creek trail would also serve the needs of other recreationalists besides boaters because it would provide another way to transit on/off the river, whether coming up from Bull Pen Bridge or passing down from Greens Creek Cemetery---since the trail would connect with the existing Chattooga River trail. In contrast, the proposed Greens Creek boaters trail would dead end into the river and would only serve the transit needs of a single user group---boaters.

80) Consequently, the EA is deficient under NEPA because the Forest Service's explanation for preferring the Greens Creek alternative and rejecting a Cane Creek trail runs counter to the evidence and is arbitrary. There is no compelling reason to push this agenda other than a desire to enhance accommodations for boaters of other specifically prioritized ORVs like the esthetics and scenery of the Chattooga. To do so in the face of the District Court's holding is clearly arbitrary and capricious.

81) The proposed 2014 Boater's Trail EA is also deficient under the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA") because it fails to inform the public how wide the reconstructed and new trails will be. The Boater's Trail EA fails to take a hard look at how wide the proposed trail will be built or how an excessive width could produce significant adverse impacts on the outstanding remarkable values (ORVs) of esthetics and scenery that are singularly present on the river above Bull Pen Bridge. If the reconstructed/new trails planned for any of the locations, but in particular at Greens Creek and Bull Pen bridge, are built to an unnecessarily wide dimension, it most certainly will diminish the "esthetic" and "scenic" wilderness like qualities that still remain

associated with the upper Chattooga. Nothing wider than a footpath is necessary but the Forest Service has not attested that their plans will be limited to such a footpath.

82) In the past, the Forest Service has constructed car width boating trails from the parking areas at both Earl's Ford and Woodall Shoals down to the banks of the Chattooga. In reality, these Forest Service introduced improvements at Earl's Ford and Woodall Shoals resemble obscene highways rather than trails that one might expect to find in a pristine wild and scenic area---which is how the upper Chattooga environs was when the river was designated as a Wild and Scenic River. Along with the excessive number of commercial rafting trips permitted in that reach, the car width trails at Woodall Shoal and Earl's Ford have contributed to a widespread physical degradation of the Chattooga environment downriver. There is no good reason for the Forest Service to have constructed those trails to the width of a car other than to provide special accommodation to the commercial whitewater rafters/paddlers who walk two abreast with their bright colored rafts held high over their heads (like turtles) as they move back and forth to the commercial outfitter's transportation buses.

83) Other users of the upper Chattooga above Bull Pen Bridge (hikers, campers, swimmers) do not need nor desire for a car width trail to be constructed down to the banks of the river below the Bull Pen bridge.The construction of car width trails like the ones already in existence at Earl's Ford and Woodall Shoals will destroy the unique and only remaining part of the river where one can reasonably expect to experience the"esthetic" sense of solitude and wilderness that the river affords above Ellicott Rock.

84) The rafting/paddling crowd has already eliminated this ORV on the lower reaches of the Chattooga. The absence of any specific trail construction detail (other than incorporation by reference to Forest Service general specifications for trail construction) also leaves in question whether the trail might ever be used for commercial purposes---a reasonably foreseeable expectation should the trail be constructed to the same widths as the those found at Earl's Ford and Woodall Shoals.

85) The EA must be much more precise in detail with respect to how these trails will be constructed, their specific width, and the precise GPS locations of these trails. It is insufficient to simply state that they will be built in accord with Forest Service manual designs.

86) The rough drawings incorporated in the 2014 Boater's Trail EA depict only generally where the trails will be built. This also violates NEPA. They provide insufficient detail in terms of precise GPS coordinates where the trails will be built. Because the drawings do not plot and overlay the actual and accurately scaled location of the proposed trails onto a topographical map of the land, a concerned citizen cannot discover and understand what kinds of trees will have to be removed in order to achieve the plan and whether or not such reconstructed and new trails might have other adverse environmental impacts.

87) The old growth forest is rapidly being denuded of shade canopy formerly provided by old growth hemlocks that have succumbed to the wooly adelgid. This shade canopy is

important to preserving an average water temperature that is cold enough in the middle of the summer to preserve the fragile ecosystems that provide homes to a multitude of creatures. At a minimum the tops of the hemlocks are falling out. Worse case, on some steep slopes where these huge trees have died immediately adjacent to the banks of the river, there is even a greater risk of erosion as these dead trees are wind blown over causing their root balls to be pried up in entirety.

88) The forcible removal/cutting of any other large deciduous trees by the Forest Service to accommodate any of the boater's trails will further contribute to the loss of shade canopy. The loss of shade canopy along with the increase siltation threatens a rise in the average temperature of the river which could have catastrophic results for the insects and the wild trout fishery that exists in that part of the river. With the availability of GPS, the Forest Service should not find it difficult to document with precise latitude and longitude where they plan to reconstruct/build new trails so that the threat to the shade canopy could be accurately assessed.

89) Will old growth hickory and walnut trees (which provide important forage for wildlife) have to be cut down? There are numbers of black walnuts and hickorys proximate to Greens Creek. The Forest Service must provide an accurate and scaled drawing on a topographical map of where the proposed trails will be built. The Forest Service has already had a couple of years to think about and plan for its new trails. Surely, the Forest Service can provide such GPS detail. Only then can the public go out and walk the proposed design and give valuable feedback about what the least intrusive alternative might be.

90) The proposed new trail to be constructed downstream of the Bull Pen bridge is unnecessary. There is an existing sufficient boater access points just above the Bull Pen bridge using the current Chattooga River trail. If boaters are unable to negotiate the challenging whitewater that exists just above the bridge, then they have no business being on this portion of the river. The Wild And Scenic Rivers Act does not allow for this recreational need to be enhanced at the expense of diminishing the sense of solitude and scenery of the area below the bridge by adding another spot for people to congregate.

91) In closing, I would request that the Forest Service abandon any efforts to construct new trails at Green Creek or below the Bullpen Bridge. Reconstructing and reinforcing the existing Chattooga River trail to minimize erosion and silt is welcomed.

EXHIBIT A
EVIDENCE OF EXCESSIVE SEDIMENT

EXHIBIT B
STREAM WIDE STRAINERS AND LOGJAMS

angled view from river left back at debris being captured on river right. Note heavy amount of siltation that has occurred in the foreground

front view of first log in logjam. there are other stream wide stems fallen behind this front log

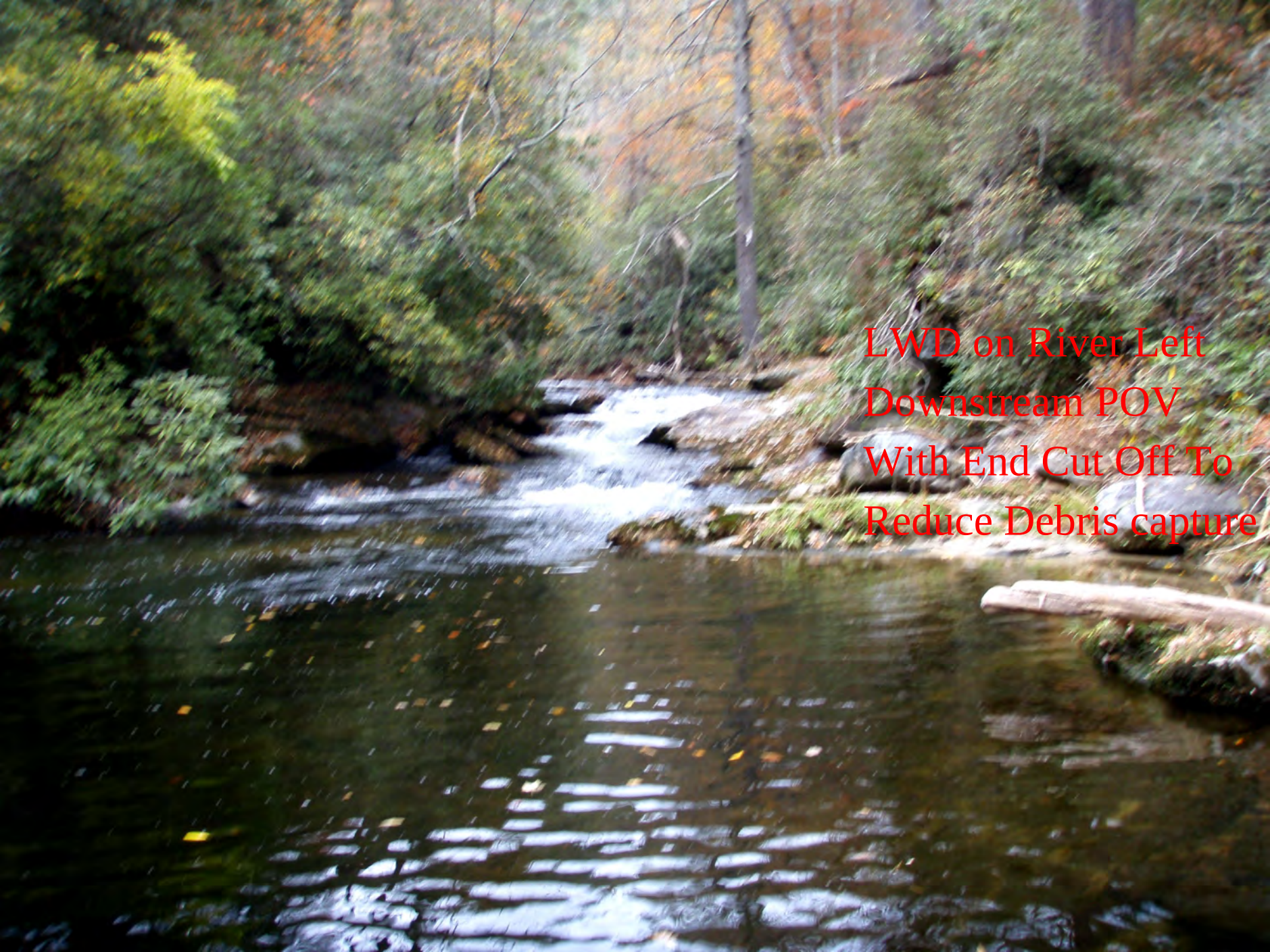
front view of logjam and debris being trapped

angled view across log jam looking at
additional logs fallen below the initial logjam

sideview of front of logjam and debris captured

view back upstream at backside of logjam

EXHIBIT C
EVIDENCE OF LARGE WOODY DEBRIS CUTTING


LWD on River Left
Downstream POV
With End Cut Off To
Reduce Debris capture

Saw cut obvious
Timing unknown
Location: River left downstream
of proposed put-in
at Greens Creek

evidence of debris
capture by LWD piece
with tip sawed off

EXHIBIT D
DEGRADATION AT EARLS FORD AND WOODALL SHOALS

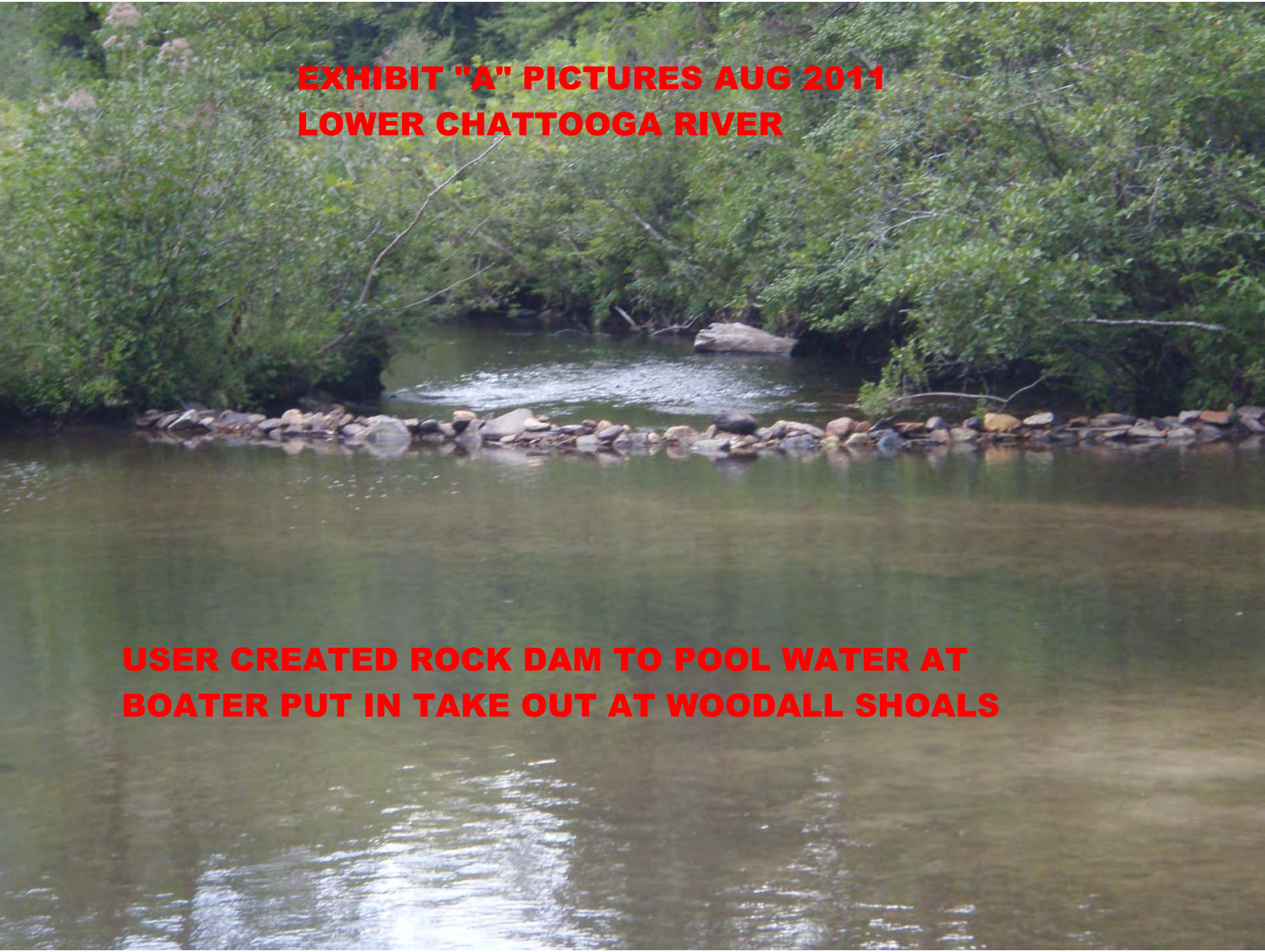


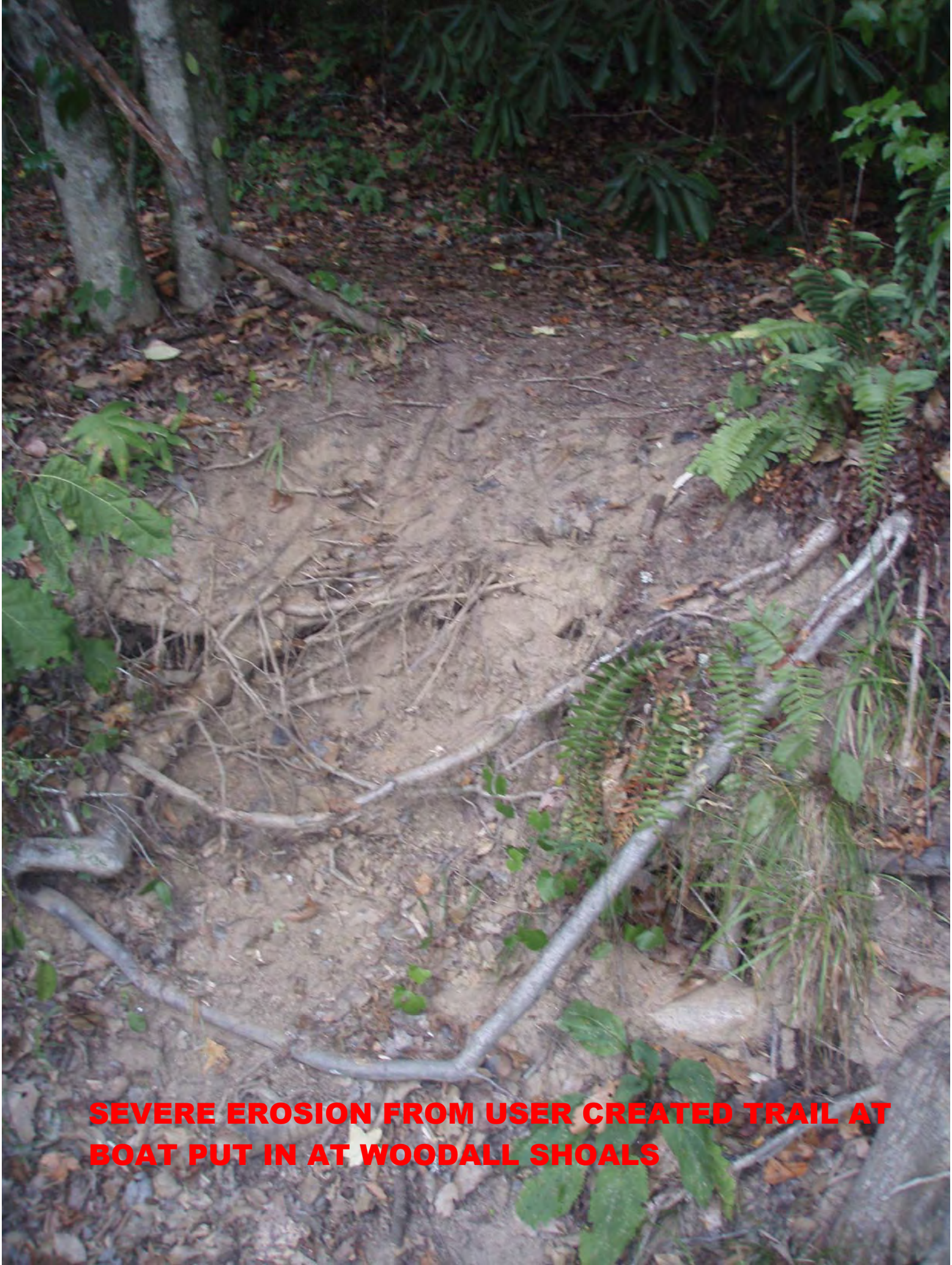
EXHIBIT "A" PICTURES AUG 2011
LOWER CHATTOOGA RIVER
USER CREATED ROCK DAM TO POOL WATER AT
BOATER PUT IN TAKE OUT AT WOODALL SHOALS

NO PARKING ANY TIME
NO PARKING ANY TIME
NO PARKING ZONE
AT WOODALL SHOALS
PARKING LOT

WILDWATER
NO PARKING ANY TIME
3800
DT466

WILDWATER
BU15226
NO PARKING ANY TIME

USER CREATED PORTAGE TRAIL
TO BOATER PUT IN TAKE OUT
WOODALL SHOALS
TO THE RIGHT
IN PROGRESS
US

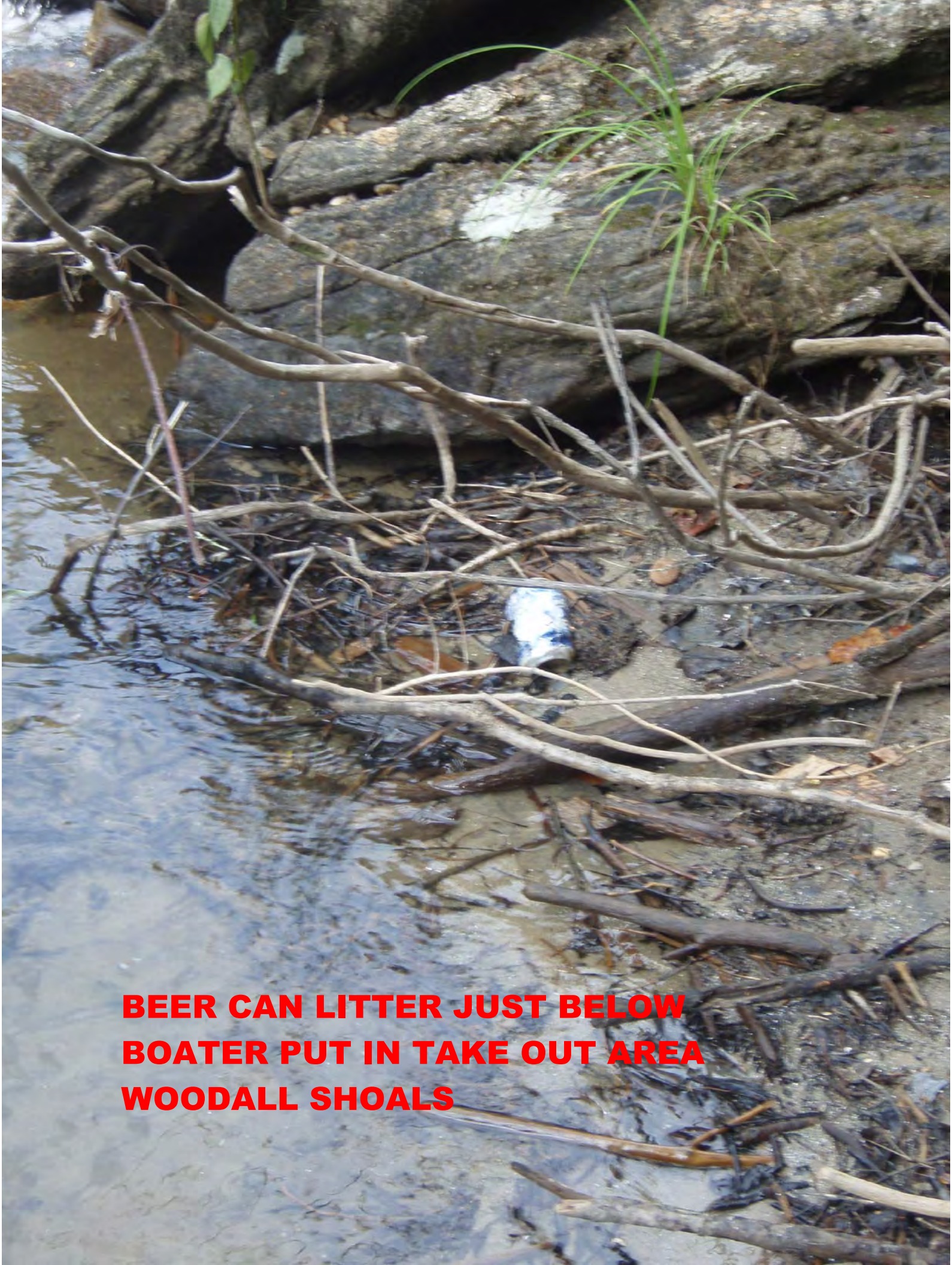


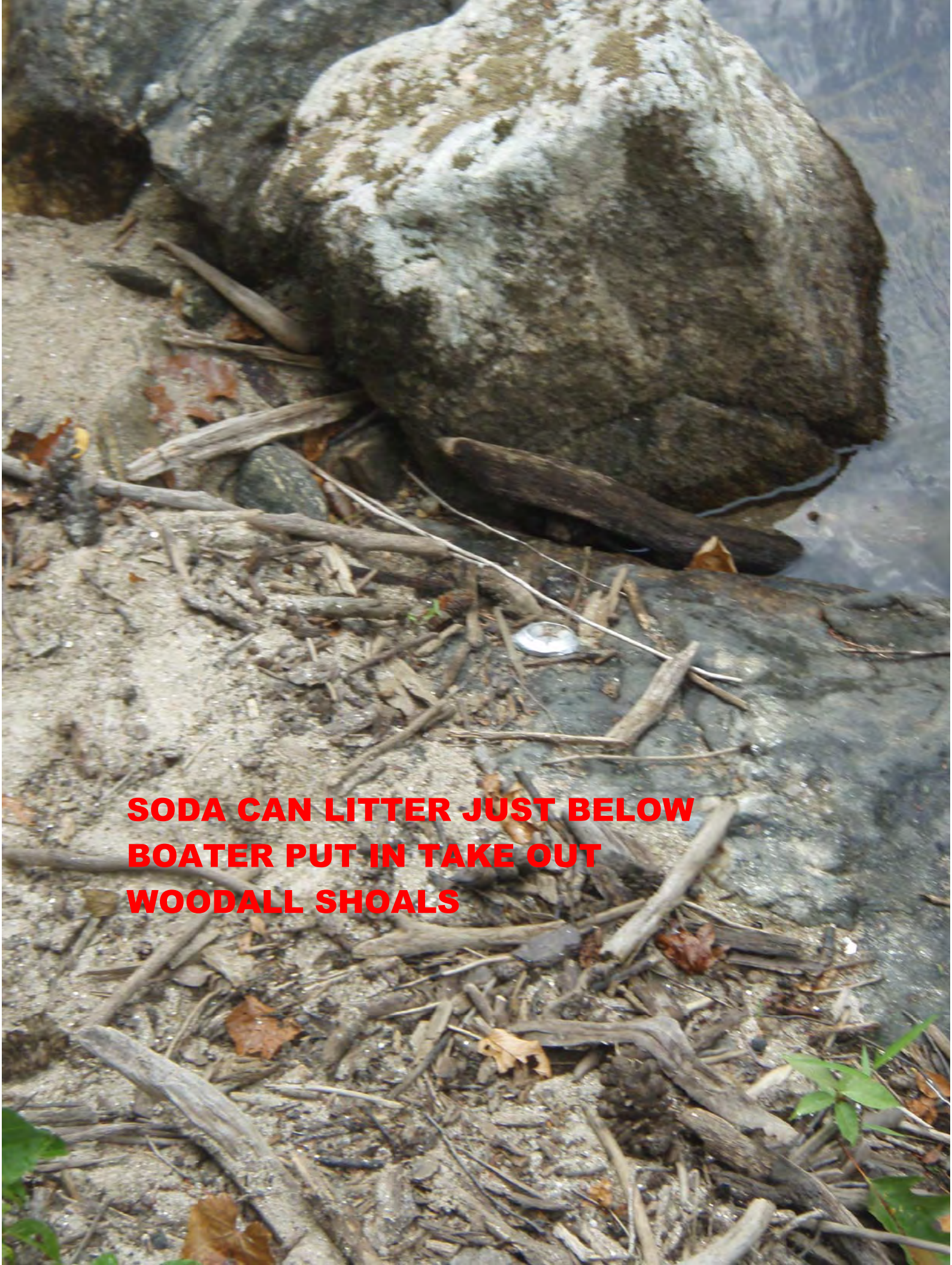
SEVERE EROSION FROM USER CREATED TRAIL AT BOAT PUT IN AT WOODALL SHOALS

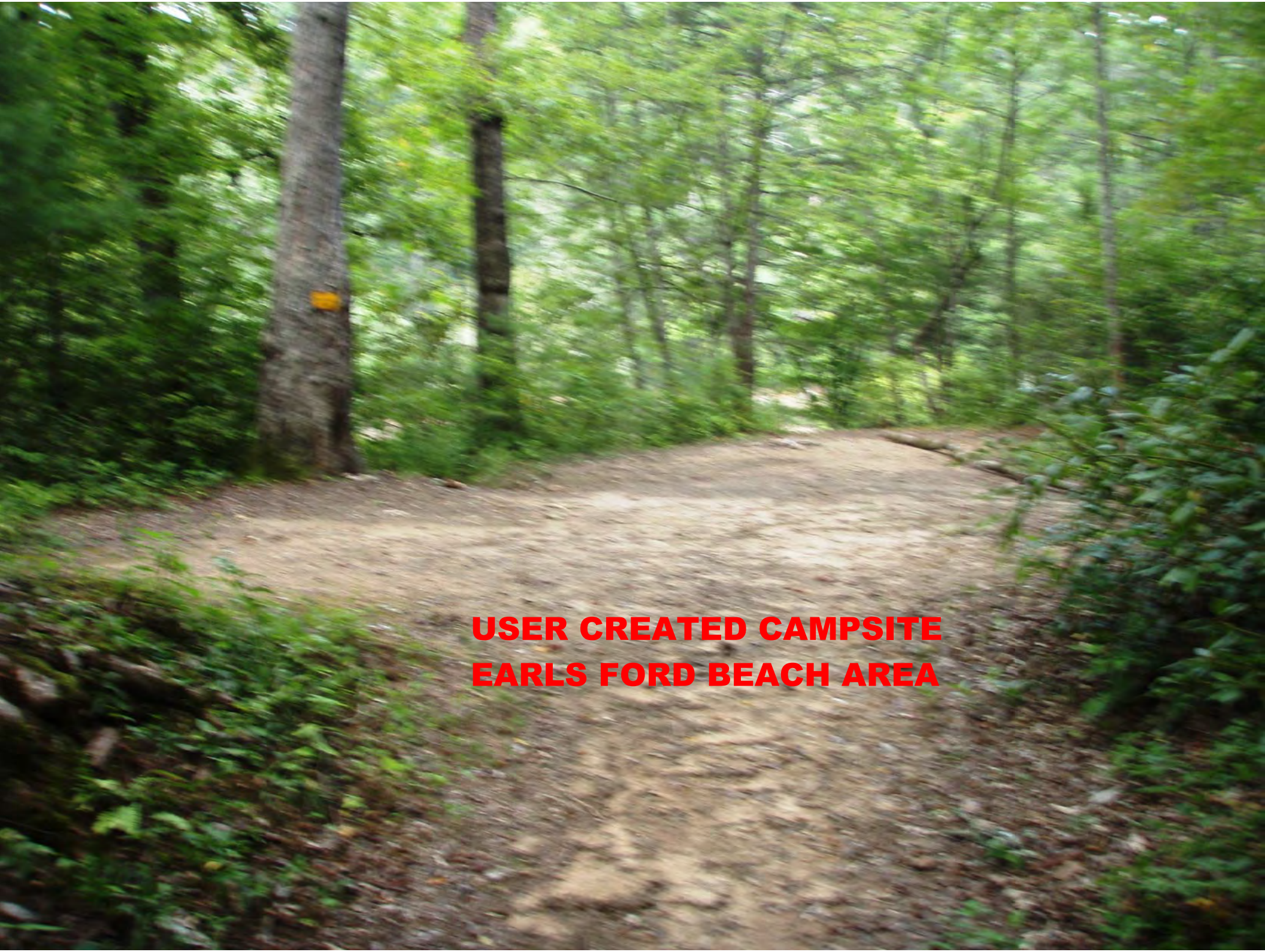
SEVERE EROSION USER CREATED TRAIL
AT BOATER PUT IN TAKE OUT
WOODALL SHOALS

LITTERED PIECE OF BOATING SHOE
ON PORTAGE TRAIL TO WOODALL SHOALS
PARKING LOT SHUTTLE PICKUP

ADDITIONAL LITTER PIECE OF BOATER SHOE ON
BEACH AT BOATER PUT IN TAKE OUT WOODALL SHOALS


BEER CAN LITTER JUST BELOW
BOATER PUT IN TAKE OUT AREA
WOODALL SHOALS


SODA CAN LITTER JUST BELOW
BOATER PUT IN TAKE OUT
WOODALL SHOALS


USER CREATED CAMPSITE
EARLS FORD BEACH AREA

USER CRATED TRAIL
EARLS FORD ACCESS

From: russ buskirk
To: FS-comments-southern-francismarion-sumter; russ buskirk
Subject: Chattooga River Boating Access
Date: Tuesday, November 04, 2014 11:44:10 PM

Please open all sections of the Chattooga to boating.

The National Forests exist for the benefit and enjoyment of the American people.
Preservation and responsible recreational uses can co-exist with proper management.
Giving one specific use access to the river; at the exclusion of other compatible activities is not "proper management".
River access via well designed trails will reduce disturbance of natural areas and other activities.

The issue of "navigable waterways" comes into play here as well.
All US rivers should be open for citizens to safely traverse in non-powered craft.
It is a heritage of the people of this country that should not be taken away from us; on any river.

I support and rely on American Whitewater to represent me in these matters.

Thank you for your consideration of more boating opportunities,
Russell Buskirk
Charleston, SC

From: Brad Preslar
To: FS-comments-southern-francismarion-sumter
Subject: Chattooga River Boating Access
Date: Tuesday, November 04, 2014 9:34:04 AM

I'm writing regarding the Environmental Assessment and proposal re: the Upper Chattooga.

1. We support the trail analysis and Forest Service proposal for trails in Alternative 2. High quality sustainable trails are good for forest visitors and the river.
2. The Forest Service does not need to require that paddlers use specific river access and egress points, but if they do, they should likewise require that all visitors seeking shore and water access use those same points.
3. The Environmental Assessment should be clear that it does not cover the section of the Upper Chattooga upstream of the Green Creek Trail, and that the resulting Paddling Permit should only be required for padlding downstream of Green Creek.

Thanks,
Brad Preslar
--
615.696.9606
www.bradpreslar.com

From: harrisonoc1
To: FS-comments-southern-francismarion-sumter
Subject: Chattooga River Boating Access
Date: Monday, November 03, 2014 7:32:37 PM

To whom it concerns:

I am a whitewater canoeist who waited decades for the opportunity to paddle the Upper Chattooga River where paddlers were wrongfully and discriminatorily denied access for so many years. The first season the river was opened to boating under the arbitrary and unnecessary flow restrictions, I felt fortunate to paddle the two sections below Bull Pen Bridge. I recently read that an environmental analysis found that last year only eight groups ran the river on seven days, down from the first year when boaters ran the river on only 17 days. This proves what paddlers have been saying all along: there would be no stampede of use on these sections and natural flow conditions should be the only restricting factors. There have been high flows during the summer months when paddlers should have been able to run the river, but were kept off by the illogical seasonal restrictions which continue to treat boaters as less legitimate than all other users – for absolutely no reason. I hope the Forest Service will see fit to lift the seasonal and flow restrictions and let paddlers, anglers and hikers share the river as they do on all other rivers that flow across the public's national forest lands in the US.

As for the trail considerations, I object to the fact that boaters are still prohibited from accessing the four miles above 28 bridge. There is a good boater access at Highway 28, yet we were forced to hike out what seemed like a mile the time we ran this section. Along with a couple of difficult portages due to rapids blocked by wood, this rendered this section hardly worth the effort involved. I felt like these rules were designed for that purpose: to dissuade paddlers from running Section 1. This is a shame, and boaters should be allowed to paddle out to Highway 28.

I support the Forest Service's work to maintain a good, environmentally sound trail system around the river. These should in no way be considered "boater trails" as they will see a lot more use from other users. With or without the nonsensical seasonal and flow restrictions, the Upper Chattooga will remain a sparsely used wilderness experience for the few users who choose to venture there. That is as it should be.

E.H. Metzger

Chattooga paddler, hiker and friend for four decades (since 1974)

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