

Chattooga River Public Comments Oct. 21 - 27, 2005

Posted on Thursday, October 21, 2005 at 12:55 Hours (Server time).

From: Drake McNeary
Email: dmcneary@hotmail.com

Telephone Number: 864-638-8679

Street Address:
8958 Highlands Hwy
Mt. Rest, SC 29664

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

A thought regarding allowing boating on the upper Chattooga - do not allow boats to put in at Burrels Ford or Bullpen Bridge. Require boaters to access via 1/4 to 1/2 mile trails with parking separate from historical access points. This would open access to boaters, limit the numbers via less convenient access, and reduce user conflicts at bridge access points.

Posted on Friday, October 21, 2005 at 12:44 Hours (Server time).

From: Matt Bohler
Email: matt.bohler@woodruffcenter.org

Telephone Number: 404-733-4408

Street Address:
3963 Ashleywoods Court, Tucker, GA 30084

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

(enter your comments)I am re-submitting this note since I cannot tell if my first message was sent.

I have been hiking and fly fishing along the upper Chatooga for many years. I was not aware that the ban on paddling the upper river had been changed until I encountered 2 paddlers below Big Bend Falls last June (6-05).

I have had one other time when I encourtered paddlers. The first was about 8 years ago and two kayakers were on the river above Big Bend Falls. THEY had no clue and were not skilled kayakers. They were

friendly but not outdoors men in any fashion. They had no idea that large falls were below them and were not even aware of the Rock Gorge area. When I told them what to expect they freaked out and didn;t know what to do. They eventually decided to carry the kayaks all the way back to Burrell's. They would have been in serious trouble if they had prodeeded. Who is going to recue the idiots who go in there and don't have the knowledge and skill to make it. Someone will have to go and get these type of paddlers in the future if the river is opening to boats.

The June 05 encounter was much less pleasant. These guys ran over my line and paddled through the pool I was fishing even though there was plenty of room to go around me.

I got angry when they ran over my line and I told them the river was closed to paddling. They scoffed and sneered at me as they said they had "heard" that it had been opened. I told them that they should show a little courtesy to other users of the river but they laughed and one shot me the finger as they paddled away. I have never gotten so angry on a fishing trip in my life. almost tossed a rock at them. The encounter ruined an otherwise fine day. I was not expecting to encounter paddlers. I was hoping for a day of solitude and wilderness. These guys were simply jerks and butt holes. I know not all paddlers are that way. I love to take my canoe down the Little Tennessee and the Chattahoochee and other rivers around the southeast. My companions are usually fun, courteous folks. However I foresee some nasty incidences between fishermen and kayakers on the upper Chattooga. It is small water and a kayak down the middle of a pool while someone is fihsing it will lead to a fight someday. Once they go through the fish just quit biting.

Please reverse this decision if it has already been made. There is not enough room on the upper river for both types of recreation. Leave at least one section for solitude and wilderness. Encountering groups of kayaks and canoes will kill that experience.

I have already found one broken kayak down near the Flats (sometimes called Sams's Flats)below the falls there and have found a lot of paddler's trash as well - gloves, broken paddles, hull repair kit, pieces of broken hull - we don;t need another source of trash on the river. There are enough beer cans washing down from Burrell's Ford. We don't need to add more.

Posted on Friday, October 21, 2005 at 0:06 Hours (Server time).

From: Will Reeves
Email: Nycteribiidae@hotmail.com

Telephone Number:

Street Address:

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

My comments are in regard to the potential impacts of allowing kayaks and canoes to float on any section of the Chattooga River above the 28 Bridge. I am whitewater canoeist with no particular interest in trout fishing, and basically I support opening the river above the 28 Bridge to boating. In regards to how many boaters will use the area, I suspect the first year after the ban is lifted will see heavy traffic. After that the numbers of boaters running these sections of the Chattooga will drop. There will inevitably be a few trips down the river at inappropriately low water levels. I don't think these sorts of trips will be the norm nor will they be common. If you are to look at similar runs in the area, boaters just don't run Overflow or Moccasin Creek when they are too low. Our boats are expensive and most of us would rather have a good time on something with water as opposed to walking down a rocky creek bed that is too low to float.

Personally, I see no reason why the government should subsidize the recreational activity of a small group of fishermen by farming fish to be released and then caught and closing an area to boating. I try to avoid fishermen when possible and make an effort not to disturb their fishing or to talk loudly when passing them on the river. I can understand the fear expressed by the trout fishing community of increased traffic on any section of the river. However, I have been canoeing creeks for years and must disagree with the statements that lifting a boating ban will result in a trashed river or wilderness experience to hikers. I have yet to hike a trail in the Chattooga area that does not have lots of loud fellow hikers, dogs, fire rings, trash, or other signs of human intrusions in the wilderness. I have boated down almost every creek in the Chattooga drainage and while many of these rivers have been trashed, the damage rarely comes from white water boaters. I seldom fin!

d garbage or human modifications to riverbeds outside of the easy access points. Regardless of the status of the boating ban, there are huge populations in several major urban areas within a few hours drive to the Chattooga area and there will be more people using the wilderness in the future.

Posted on Friday, October 21, 2005 at 14:14 Hours (Server time).

From: jeff althouse
Email: jeff.althouse@worldspan.com

Telephone Number: 770-563-7934

Street Address:
1971 Benson Ave Smyrna, GA 30080

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

My gosh.....don't they have enough river to float? Above Hwy 28 is a wonderful wilderness area, and should remain that way for generations to come. The river in this area is not large enough to share. I can't imagine hiking 3-5 miles for some wilderness fishing and have a boater come floating by and put the fish down and ruin the experience. I have experienced some of the "sharing" on other rivers and the boaters have no respect for the fishermen.

Posted on Friday, October 21, 2005 at 18:57 Hours (Server time).

From: Terry Seehorn
Email: TSeehorn@alltel.net

Telephone Number: 706-746-5227

Street Address:
230 Bob Mark Trail
Rabun Gap GA 30568

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

I believe the analysis process will be flawed from the beginning. transient user groups such as the bird watcher or the day-tripping trout fisherman from Atlanta or Greenville won't be around to comment. These groups stand to lose the most as their assumed backcountry experience will be compromised heavily by a boating user group. Comments from whitewater enthusiasts will be over-represented because of the heavy publicity campaign already being waged. Comments from the user group of most concern, the inexperienced boater will be underrepresented. It will be these inexperienced boaters that will be the ones to truly impact the backcountry experience. It is also this group that stands to lose the most in the sense of being ignorant of the dangerous nature of the river in this section. It is these tubers and drunks who will have as much right to the river as legitimate and cautious experienced boaters who will die regularly attempting to negotiate big bend falls as if it!

could truly be done by the inexperienced. If this is allowed, i fully intend to send archived copies of this warning about the danger to the families of the deceased and I also pledge to assist them to financially in filing suit against the Forest Service for the gross negligence which would be obvious to anyone who has ever fished or walked along this section of river. In other words, a flawed idea begets a flawed process which is what listening to the public and ignoring the river itself would be.

Posted on Friday, October 21, 2005 at 22:09 Hours (Server time).

From: Jim Leutenegger
Email: Jleute@hotmail.com

Telephone Number: 770-582-1871

Street Address:
4917 Rapids Court
Norcross, GA 30092

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

1. Not lifting the ban is as fair as banning fishing. However, banning fishing on that stretch of river would solve any conflict issues between boaters and fisherman and would reduce user impact on the area.
2. The nature of the river (small) and the access (roads) are not conducive to commercial trips. Therefore, it should be closed to commercial trips..
3. The two year period should allow public boating on specific days, weeks or specific water levels so that a useful analysis can be formed.

Posted on Sunday, October 23, 2005 at 10:57 Hours (Server time).

From: James Wood
Email: aquaticmind@gmail.com

Telephone Number: 336-499-4166

Street Address:
216 Richmond Hill Dr
Asheville nc 28806

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

I would like a fair and reasonable solution to the restrictions on boating on the head waters of the Chattooga. I beleive that that angling and boating can coexist on the river, without negative impacts on the river. I am specifically interested in what negative impacts boater are predicted to have on the river, and how these impacts differ from those imposed by anglers.
Please keep me informed on the situation by e-mail.

Posted on Monday, October 24, 2005 at 23:36 Hours (Server time).

From: tony mann
Email: (enter your email)

Telephone Number: 803 791 3963

Street Address:
901 Lafayette Ave
Cayce SC 29033

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

WW Boaters as a rule show great respect for nature in general. While fisherman and hikers can report 'snapshots' of a river's condition boaters see the whole river and will usually see problems first. Last year a friend of mine and I put out a dock fire on the Saluda River that could have damaged many near-by homes but because of the landscape the homeowners and therefore the fire department would not have known until quite a large fire had built. We saw the fire as we passed on the river and stopped to investigate. A high % of boaters have biology or life science related degrees and all boaters have taken part in river rescue and many have training to render first aid in wilderness situations. Boaters have provided aid, rescue and report of injured or lost hikers or fisherman in the past. Obviously boaters can carry word of needed aid much faster than those on foot. Part of the culture of boaters is not to disturb nature or others that are interacting with nature unless!

asked. Thank you for allowing us to post comments and please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide further assistance.

Tony Mann BSN, MSN, FNP

Posted on Wednesday, October 26, 2005 at 19:43 Hours (Server time).

From: Ken Strickland
Email: (enter your email)

Telephone Number: (enter your phone)

Street Address:
PO Box 63
Morganton, GA 30560

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

Upper Chattooga Comments

During the Visitor Use Capacity Analysis period I feel that limited private boating should be allowed on the presently closed sections of the river. This has been a usual practice when hydroelectric relicensing incorporates whitewater boating in a renewed plan, and has served well as a data gathering arrangement for all concerned parties.

I also feel that river gages (not necessarily transmitting type gages) should be installed at both the Bull Pen Bridge and Burrell's Ford access points. These gages would be instrumental in determining when

water levels are both favorable and unfavorable for boating these stretches of river. My observations, based on a thirty-two year familiarity with the area, is that during the course of a year there will be far fewer days favorable to whitewater boating than unfavorable, and those few favorable days will occur primarily during the winter and early spring months. In other words, Mother Nature will simply render these sections of river unboatable for much of the year.

If it is determined that a limited or restricted use of this area should be enacted because of its Wilderness or Wild and Scenic status, then this limited or restricted use must apply to all users.

If it is determined that a fee or registration is required by users of this area, then this fee or registration must apply to all users.

I am one of what is probably now a handful of people still actively kayaking today who paddled this stretch of river prior to its closure. By 1975 the major rapids had been named and even though it was considered a difficult run, all the rapids (even Big Bend Falls) had been safely descended numerous times. And then, much to my and others' surprise, it was closed to boating well after (two years?) the Chattooga River had been designated Wild and Scenic. This closure to boating was an act that made little sense to me: A specific group of people, one that had little or no impact upon the backcountry, was being prohibited from enjoying a Natural Resource.

I would like to add that I have the utmost respect for all others who use the outdoors in a regardful manner. I believe we should be allies against what are real threats to this place we so love: Water quality degradation due to irresponsible upstream development and habitat destruction, to name a couple.

In addition to kayaking, I am an avid hiker/backpacker and bicyclist.

Posted on Wednesday, October 26, 2005 at 18:40 Hours (Server time).

From: Duane A. Stalnaker
Email: duanespc@earthlink.net

Telephone Number: 770-560-9723

Street Address:
828 Burton Ridge Dr.
Loganville, GA 30052

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

Regarding the proposal to open up the Chattooga River above Hwy. 28 Bridge to boating, as an outdoorsman and fisherman I would like to publicly voice my opposition to this proposed action. It makes no sense to do this as it will no doubt create boater,angler conflicts. This ban

was put in effect for good reasons ,to avoid such conflicts and preserve the backcountry experience. The boaters already have the best parts of the river to enjoy and in my opinion the only reason American Whitewater wants access to this section is that they don't have legal access to it now.It is a matter of record that they have stated that they want nothing else but total unrestricted access to the river and are not willing to compromise at all. A few years ago, a Delayed Harvest program was implemented on the section from Hwy 28 Bridge upstream for 2 miles to the mouth of Reed Cr. This section has become very popular for fisherman and is one of the only DH screams in the state where one can actuall!

y "get away" and enjoy the solitude. To allow boaters on this section would greatly diminish the experience and no doubt cause conflicts between anglers and boaters. I ask that the ban be kept in place. Thank you for allowing me to comment.

Posted on Wednesday, October 26, 2005 at 17:45 Hours (Server time).

From: Robert Williams
Email: bwilliams@edensandavant.com

Telephone Number: 803-865-0162

Street Address:
10 West Springs Court
Columbia, SC 29223

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

As an avid trout fisherman, I find few places where I can fish without constant disruption from boaters and floaters. Nearly every other river I fish is open to boating acvitivity, including the Nantahala, lower Saluda, Deep Creek and portions of the Davidson. Please do not allow this last "wilderness" section of the Chattooga to be lost to boaters. It is not necessary that they have access to the last closed section of the river. Please reject the proposal from American Whitewaters to have the previos decisions reversed. I am an interested, involved member of Trout Unlimited. I would welcome receiving any updates or information that your department puts out.

Thank you for allowing us this forum to express our views.

Posted on Tuesday, October 25, 2005 at 19:24 Hours (Server time).

From: Frank Paul
Email: troutbeck@nuvox.net

Telephone Number: 864 8820077

Street Address:

2932 N. Bayshore Dr.
Seneca, SC 29672

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

Clearly, the issue here is with respect to overusage of a Wild and Scenic Chattooga River area. I am concerned that boating above the 28 bridge will eventually bring situations of users requiring rescue because of their lack of ability to use the river properly. Clearly, going over Big Bend falls can be quite a challenge, and rescue in such situations will be difficult to impossible - guess who will be sued by neophyte boaters? Additionally, the solitude for many users will be violated by boating users, especially fishing folks, hikers, bird watchers, and folks enjoying the quiet of the wild river area. Additionally, I expect to see serious congestion at the Burrell's Ford bridge area with demands for enhanced parking spaces with the attendant asphaltting of the wild and scenic area. This will seriously impact the solitude of the mountain area.

Posted on Tuesday, October 25, 2005 at 17:53 Hours (Server time).

From: Larry Walker
Email: amosndixie@alltel.net

Telephone Number: 7062120424

Street Address:
321 Hawk Hill Lane
Lakemont, Ga
30552

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

I am opposed to a trial or a permanent decision to allow boaters &/or tubers on the upper section of the Wild & Scenic Chattooga River.

1. The trial won't be truly representative of the on-going impact because it will take years before word spreads to all the hoards that will come.
2. I don't want to spend another of my tax dollars funding our Rabun County emergency resources rescuing or recovering idiots from the clutches of the river.
3. The erosion and trash that boaters will bring isn't needed in the upper region of the river.
4. A W&S river should be quiet and peaceful. Noisy boaters are not compatible with the intent of the W&S intent.
5. Please don't turn the upper reaches of the peaceful Chattooga River into the Hell of Helen!

Posted on Tuesday, October 25, 2005 at 13:55 Hours (Server time).

From: Dale Powell

Email: lepowell43@aol.com

Telephone Number: 770-521-1211

Street Address:
2060 Linkside Drive
Alpharetta, Ga 30005

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

I oppose the opening of the section of the Chattooga River above the Hwy 28 bridge to boating and kayaking. I feel that it would destroy the Wild and Scenic Designation of this magnificent resource. Let's keep it as wild and scenic as possible. Don't yield to pressure and destroy another precious wild resource.

Posted on Tuesday, October 25, 2005 at 13:00 Hours (Server time).

From: Douglas Faust
Email: construct357@yahoo.com

Telephone Number: 404-622-7879

Street Address:
2534 Tritt Springs Trace NE
Marietta, GA 30062

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

Dear Coordinator,
I would like to speak against opening the river to kayaking above the Highway 28 Bridge. If allowed, this action would interfere with natural fish spawns that support wild trout stock in this stream. I believe that some stream should be maintained in a more natural state and keeping the trout reproduction healthy is a part of the natural conditions.
Sincerely,
Doug Faust

Posted on Wednesday, October 26, 2005 at 7:39 Hours (Server time).

From: Joshua Trey Barnett
Email: caddisfly08@yahoo.com

Telephone Number: (706) 354-8500

Street Address:
4293 New Kings Bridge Road
Nicholson, Georgia

30565

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

This seemingly large problem with several possible solutions we have stumbled upon is in truth a simple conflict with only one just resolution.

Both groups of outdoorsmen, anglers and boaters, are looking to find peace and solitude on the Chattooga River. It is my proposal that the regulations continue to stand without change. Making any modification to the current governing laws, in favor of boating access to be unlimited, is not only inconsiderate, but quite unnecessary.

Each group has thrived in their own sections of the River for years. It is my opinion that they can continue to do so. There are hundreds of access points for boaters all over the South, each with their own amount of uniqueness-- trout fishermen, however, are limited to fewer resources.

I ask that you please consider making no modifications to current regulations concerning the Chattooga River upstream of the 28 Bridge.

Please continue to preserve one of the last wild places in Northeast Georgia.

Thank you,

Joshua Barnett

Posted on Thursday, October 27, 2005 at 11:38 Hours (Server time).

From: Belfield Carter III
Email: bhciiiga@aol.com

Telephone Number: 4043642054

Street Address:
3006 Skyland Dr.
Atlanta, Ga 30341

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

As a regular visitor to the Chattooga river up above the "Iron Bridge" I was horrified to learn that the USFS was considering opening it to boaters. My principle use of the river is fishing, and I have had several fishing trips spoiled by kayakers "poaching" a run though that section. Anyone familiar with that stretch of river knows that it is rather small and that there is not enough room to "share the water". The bottom line is trout fishing does not screw up kayaking, but a group of

boaters will "put down" the trout for an extended length of time, turning a productive day of fishing into a bust. It has happened to me on several occasions. There is plenty of water downstream of Hwy. 28 that is marginal trout water at best where the boaters have access. Lets not spoil this pristine and beautiful fishery with a procession of kayakers every weekend.