

Chattooga River Public Comments Nov. 24 - Dec. 6, 2005

Upper Chattooga River - Recreation Use Form

Name (optional) **David Van Lear**

1. What is the most important activity on the trip? (be specific - Ex: Backcountry Fishing, Backpacking, Camping, etc)

backcountry fishing

2. What other activities would you do on the trip? (Ex: Hiking, Wildlife Viewing, Hunting, Wild Flowering, Birding, etc)

hiking, viewing wildlife, botanizing

3. Where would you go? List the segment(s) you would use and describe your travel route (if any).

Above and below Burrells Ford bridge, Big Bend area, Above and below hywy 28 bridge about 2 miles

4. When (what time of year) could you take this trip? (Please specify months, season, or "all year"). [This measures entire season.]

I fish numerous times during year, probably 10 - 20 times. I fish during all seasons.

5. When is the best time of year to take this type of trip? How often do you take (or would you take) this trip per year? [This measures the "prime season".]

I enjoy spring and fall best, but also like the solitude of winter fishing. Probably 5-10 times in spring and fall.

6. How many people (include yourself) would be in your group on this trip?

Just myself, sometimes with a friend

7. How long would your trip be? (Days or hours)

Normally 2-4 hours

8. Describe the most important attributes of the trip - the conditions or characteristics of the trip that make it high quality.

The solitude, the natural beauty of the river and its watershed, catching a few fish which I release

9. Describe the specific concerns you have about how other recreation users in the area may affect your trips.

Concerns about boaters adversely affecting the quality of the experience and the catchability of the trout

Take a few minutes to answer these questions. Do it right now. Help to preserve and protect the solitude and uniqueness of the only section of the Chattooga that has not been damaged by conflict and management for too many user groups.

**Send your comments to: Project Coordinator - John Cleaves, E-mail jcleaves@fs.fed.us
USDA Forest Service, 4931 Broad River Road, Columbia, SC 29212**

All info gathered will be posted on the Sumter NF website in the next week or so:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/fms/>

Please 'forward' this to other visitors you know that want to help preserve the Upper Chattooga River.

Thanks & Happy Trails, Doug

Mr. Cleeves,

I am sorry I could not attend the public meetings. This form was forwarded to me to provide input. I hope this helps your plan for preserving this wonderful resource in the south.

Upper Chattooga River- Recreation Use Form

Name (optional) ___Arthur Spalding_____

1. What is the most important activity on the trip? (be specific -Ex: Backcountry Fishing, Backpacking, Camping, etc) Fly Fishing
2. What other activities would you do on the trip? (Ex: Hiking, Wildlife Viewing, Hunting, Wild Flowering, Birding, etc) Hunt - Birds and Rabbit, Backpack
3. Where would you go? List the segment(s) you would use and describe your travel route (if any). Above Highway 28 Chattooga River. Management section 2, mostly.
4. When (what time of year) could you take this trip? (Please specify months, season, or "all year"). Fall sometimes Spring
5. When is the best time of year to take this type of trip? How often do you take (or would you take) this trip per year? Fall - once per year and again once in Spring
6. How many people (include yourself) would be in your group on this trip? 2-4
7. How long would your trip be? 2-3 days
8. Describe the most important attributes of the trip - the conditions or characteristics of the trip that make it high quality. Solitude with great, wild, game
9. Describe the specific concerns you have about how other recreation users in the area may affect your trips. Horses can cause erosion depending on volume. No ATVs or bus trips (rubber hatch) to the sections of the river, please.

Name: Joshua Trey Barnett
Address: 4293 New Kings Bridge Road, Nicholson, Ga., 30565
Phone: (706) 354-8500 [Home] or (706) 202-7713 [Cell]
E-Mail: caddisfly08@yahoo.com

- 1. What is the most important activity on the trip? (Be specific - Ex: Backcountry Fishing, Backpacking, Camping, etc) Backcountry Fly Fishing**
- 2. What other activities would you do on the trip? (Ex: Hiking, Wildlife Viewing, Hunting, Wild Flowering, Birding, etc) Camping and/or Hiking**

3. Where would you go? List the segment(s) you would use and describe your travel route (if any). ALL fishing is above the Highway 28 Bridge. Trails alongside Chattooga River upstream of the Highway 28 Bridge.

4. When (what time of year) could you take this trip? (Please specify months, season, or "all year"). [This measures entire season.] 12 Months/Year. Specifically spring and winter.

5. When is the best time of year to take this type of trip? How often do you take (or would you take) this trip per year? [This measures the "prime season".] Spring. Approximately 10-15 trips/year.

6. How many people (include yourself) would be in your group on this trip? Up to five, but not limited to five.

7. How long would your trip be? (Days or hours) Daytrips due to close location.

8. Describe the most important attributes of the trip - the conditions or characteristics of the trip that make it high quality. First and foremost, solitude. Anglers in North Georgia face boaters and tubers on many streams) that would normally be terrific trout fisheries. Most anglers are interested in maintaining this beautiful area where we can find solitude from 'normal' conditions.

9. Describe the specific concerns you have about how other recreation users in the area may affect your trips. Boater/Angler conflicts.

The original actions taken by the USFS to prevent boating in the upper reaches of the Chattooga River (Upstream of HWY 28 Bridge) were taken to deter boater and angler conflicts. Please continue to realize that this will be a problem if the ban is lifted. Please make the 'right' decisions regarding the User Capacity Analysis.

Joshua Barnett
Editor, The Modern Angler
Tier, Back Porch Fly Company
4293 New Kings Bridge Road
Nicholson, Georgia 30565
H: 1-706-354-8500
C: 1-706-372-5574

Dear John

I spent some of the weekend on the upper and lower Chattooga taking images of the river. Lots of fun but it is getting too cold for shorts in that water. I was on section 00, 0, 2 and 3 also I visited the overflow & Chauga.

--See below river notes----

My excursion on, and around, the Chattooga can be summarized as follows. I saw about 15 hunter/fishing

camps, over 50 anglers, 20+ day hikers, some equestrian activity, and 3 floaters. No anglers were seen below Hwy 28.

I have been to section 2,3,4 in the spring and summer months and have seen a very different river, especially on the commercially rafted sections.

--So here are my questions. ---

Not stocking sections 2 or 3, and letting trails overgrow, have provided an effective zoning policy which has zoned anglers and hikers from the lower sections of the Chattooga. A policy that works on even the most crowded fishing days of the delayed harvest. The lack of anglers below HWY 28 was obvious especially when you consider the full parking lot at Russell bridge (see image attached). The lack of river trails on the SC side of the Chattooga made it difficult for scenic day hikes, another user group that was poorly represented on the lower river.

The 2001 Farmington River study and the Grand Canyon study (cir 2002) by the Forest service elude to "unofficial" zoning policies that have been very effective in reducing wilderness user-conflicts.

However, if all the Chattooga River should be open to All user groups, then shouldn't the lower sections (II, III, IV) encourage the higher demographic groups of anglers and day hikers. Should the lower sections be stocked? Should some trail repair be initiated to open the over grown riverside trails on the SC side? If the maximization of the Chattooga resource through unlimited use is the USFS goal (per the AWA) and not the maximization of overall visitors experiences (per the Sumter RRLMP 2004), then we should be stocking the lower Chattooga and unearthing old trails.

"Unofficial" zoning sounds devious to the casual reader but I can see how this policy can, and has, been very effective. It obviously does not result in a public wailing for action when one group is openly zoned from public access (like the boaters). However, the passive zoning is being made obvious to the public through this LAC and as a result full access to all sections will be the next demand put on the Chattooga's resource.

I think the public deserves more credit than you are giving them. The existing Forest Service policy is very reasonable and would be understood by the general public. I'm sure you will get small factions complaining about any policy restricting use but the majority of the public would accept a rational and open decision to zone the river. I am assuming that the current policies are not serendipitous but rather planned, which you will probably never tell me. In

either case, it is a working plan with only a small group complaining.

The can has been cracked opened and the worms are writhing, the relatively small group of users (creekers) is dwarfed by the hikers and anglers. If the can were to open, and boaters were allowed access on the headwaters, then anglers and hikers will demand access via stocking and trails on the lower river. The overall visitor's experience and solitude, will then be sub-optimized for all users. The losers will be all visitors, including hikers, boaters and anglers, and the Forest Service Rangers who will need to manage the new set of user conflicts.

Best Regards;
Michael Bamford

Mr. Cleeves,

Below is my survey for the Upper Chattooga River. I hope you will find this useful.

Sincerely,

Sid Elliott
Atlanta

Upper Chattooga River - Recreation Use Form

Name **Sid Elliott**

1. What is the most important activity on the trip? **Backcountry fishing**
2. What other activities would you do on the trip? **Hiking, wildlife viewing, wild flowering**
3. Where would you go? List the segment(s) you would use and describe your travel route (if any). **From Burrell's Ford, upstream to NC line (on SC side) and downstream (mostly on SC side) through and below Big Ben falls. Also use DH trout section, Reed Creek to Hwy 28 (both GA and SC sides).**
4. When (what time of year) could you take this trip? **Other than DH trout section, greatest use is from early Spring (usually April) through September for backcountry fishing, November through May for DH trout fishing, year round for hiking.**
5. When is the best time of year to take this type of trip? **For backcountry fishing in the section above Burrell's Ford, best time is April though June; for backcountry fishing below Burrell's Ford, best time is April through September (depending on water levels and conditions; for DH trout fishing between Reed Creek and Hwy 28, best time is November/December and April/May.**

How often do you take (or would you take) this trip per year? [This measures the "prime season".]
Backcountry fishing above and below Burrell's Ford, 4-8 times per year; DH fishing, 4-6 times per year (note: I live in Atlanta)

6. How many people (include yourself) would be in your group on this trip? **Typically, 2 – 4 people**

7. How long would your trip be? (Days or hours) **Trips typically are "all day" – 8-10 hours. Some would be overnight 2 day events (but would stay in motel not camp)**

8. Describe the most important attributes of the trip - the conditions or characteristics of the trip that make it high quality. **Scenery, solitude, river environment (clean water, trout, "white noise" of river)**

9. Describe the specific concerns you have about how other recreation users in the area may affect your trips. **Overuse, crowds, damage to fragile environment, safety of people using the river, possible conflicts with others (like rafters coming through areas I am trying to fish)**

Dear John,

What is being done about the brook floater (*Alasmidonta varicosa*). Could you please post the Natural Heritage Program research notes and the FS conservation efforts regarding this imperiled species.

Mike Bamford
PO 2725
Cashiers, NC

-----Original Message-----

From: Eric Krueger [mailto:ekrueger@TNC.ORG]
Sent: Thursday, October 20, 2005 10:15 AM
To: mike@tupelotoys.com
Subject: RE: Fresh water mussels

Hi, Michael..

The Chattooga River is home to South Carolina's best population of , an imperiled species which is at the southern extent of its range down here.

I have not searched those areas personally, so I don't have any of my own data for that neck of the woods. I have two databases on mussels from an independent researcher and from South Carolina's Natural Heritage Program. I know for fact that the Sumter NF already has both of these databases in their possession.

The brook floater population in the Chattooga is one of SC's best remaining mussel resources, and should be protected to the extent possible. Let me know if I can help further.

Eric

-----Original Message-----

From: Tupelo Toys [mailto:mike.bamford@verizon.net]
Sent: Tuesday, October 18, 2005 1:09 PM
To: ekrueger@tnc.org
Subject: Fresh water mussels

Dear Eric,

We are interested to learn if fresh water mussels can be found in the foothill rivers and streams. We are starting a wildlife catalog for the Chattooga Wild & Scenic River. Currently the NFS are considering increasing kayaking into the upper headwaters of the Chattooga river. We are attempting to catalog available data on wildlife species.

If you have any data on mussels in these creeks and streams it would be helpful for our study. Alternatively you can send the information directly to the Sumter NF or the Chattooga Nature Conservancy.

Thank you for your help.

Best Regards;
Michael Bamford
Whiteside Cove Association

Posted on Tuesday, November 29, 2005 at 15:19 Hours (Server time).

From: Butch Clay
Email: bclay@nuvox.net

Telephone Number: 864 638 7885

Street Address:
10320 Highlands Highway

Mountain Rest, SC 29664

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

Recreation Use Form

Name(optional) Butch Clay

1. What is the most important activity on the trip?

1) Getting into the backcountry...going where others mostly do not venture. Getting away from the grid, away from roads and loud, heedless humans; going into the upper watershed as deep as time and my two legs will allow.

2) Seeing a portion of the Chattooga watershed that most won't bother to get into; watching expectantly for that rare glimpse of a bobcat or a bear or some other shy forest creature that seeks refuge in one of the few remaining places where humans mostly do not bother to go.

To feel the subtle but profound joy in visiting a place so improbably sublime as the upper Chattooga watershed, a place that has retained or recovered some of its original wild character despite the many insults of industrialized humans and the insidious encroachments of their ceaseless developments.

2. What other activities would you do on the trip?

Sit in the woods. Relax. Imbibe the solemn peace, the quiet and the sanctity of the Creator's masterwork. Watch the light as it pours down into the Chattooga gorge. Maybe make a photograph.

3. Where would you go? List the segment(s) you would use and describe your travel route (if any).

I go anywhere above the 28 bridge where the watershed promises to maybe reveal some of the natural delights of the headwaters' blessedly intractable topography. Downstream of 28 is good for fun and hiking, swimming, floating and recreation. It's a great national recreational treasure.

But upstream is a different river essentially. It is a wilderness treasure, a wildlife refuge, an ecological museum and a nature temple all rolled into one. I go upstream to discover the hidden retreats and remnants of another, earlier, less well-known (and far-less trammled) Chattooga.

4. When (what time of year) could you take this trip? (Please specify months, season, or "all year"). [This measures entire season.]

Anytime that time allows.

5. When is the best time of year to take this type of trip. How often do you take (or would you take) this trip per year? [This measures the "prime season.]"

Prime season for me is winter, early spring or late fall, when the crotalid population is comfortably napping, the yellow jackets are not aggressive, and the chance of being fried by lightning are not as great as in late summer. However, I like to go anytime, and just plan and move accordingly.

6. How many people (include yourself) would be in your group on this trip?

One or two...no more except on rare occasion.

7. How long would your trip be? (Days or hours)

Usually just hours, but sometimes 2/3 days.

8. Describe the most important attributes of the trip - the conditions or characteristics of the trip that make it high quality.

- 1) Seeing the terrain on its own terms, by foot.
- 2) The solicitude

9) Describe the specific concerns you have about how other recreation users in the area may affect your trips.

My central concerns, with respect to the issue at hand, are that river floaters who have gained easy access into the Chattooga backcountry will spook the game, or intrude upon the wilderness retreat experience of those who prefer to hike or wade in, rather than paddle.

Most Chattooga boaters in my experience, in addition to being sometimes superbly gifted paddlers, are usually very aware and appreciative of the kind of wildness that survives (mostly) only in the headwaters.

Nevertheless, this initiative will bring easy access into stretches of the Chattooga that hitherto have survived as defacto wilderness refuge cores for wildlife. Such places are exceedingly rare these days, and should be preserved. To the extent that some reaches of the headwaters are still wild, they are so because they are not much visited and have become wild sanctuaries. The value of such places to wildlife and to wildlife lovers in this increasingly overcrowded part of the country can hardly be overstated. It does not take much human influx to compromise these fragile values, and the current system of limiting access to foot travel seems to be just enough to allow wilderness and wildlife refuge qualities to survive in the headwaters, which have not survived to as great a degree below Highway 28.

Moreover, this initiative could in fact bring LOTS OF PEOPLE crowding in from parts distant just to run the whitewater, who might neither know much about nor appreciate the special qualities of the river stretches they are paddling, and who might not be as respectful or as appreciative of the rare uniqueness of this river as most (if not all) local Chattooga boaters would usually be. Wilderness loving boaters would thereby lose equally as much as non-boaters would lose the wilderness values.

The result of that development would be, to my mind, a tragic diminishment of the wild and scenic river values that caused this river to be designated in the first place. The influx of surfing traffic would render the Chattooga headwaters a little bit less like the uniquely wild Chattooga headwaters we now have—and would too often make it, instead, a good bit more like the paddling rodeo circus of the Ocoee or the Nantahala.

In this step, stakeholders identify the types of recreation uses they would like to see happen on the river and describe desirable conditions for conducting those activities. Responses are rolled up into a matrix that identifies the different types of users and what a good experience would be (social conditions); an understanding of environmental settings, characteristics, and potential impacts (resource conditions); and some initial indications of what it would take to manage for these experiences (managerial conditions).

Additional B Clay responses relevant to the following issues:

Resource conditions (i.e.: an understanding of environmental settings, characteristics, and potential impacts.)

With all due respect to all parties, to my mind what is getting lost in all this talk about "visitor capacity" and "use" is, precisely, the resource

itself. It was a unique, probably unrepeatable combination of historical, topographical and managerial factors that bequeathed to us the rare treasure that is the rugged, wild, upper Chattooga. It's wild and fine to this day only because it has been mostly hard to reach. Say what you want to about this boater initiative, it will throw the baby out with the bath water. If the boating initiative goes through, the wilderness and solitude are substantially compromised for all "users."

The beginning of ANY discussions of possible Limits of Acceptable change to that unique resource should rightfully begin with the possible changes in the wild river resource itself that ANY increase in floater use would bring about. That's paramount, in my view, to considerations of an understanding of environmental settings, characteristics, and potential impacts.

In other words, though this discussion so far is being mostly framed as an issue of possible "user conflict" and the "allocation of resources" across user groups and stakeholders, we should nevertheless not lose sight of the fact that the Chattooga headwaters area has value in and of itself as a unique natural watershed that is far wilder and more intact than most rivers of its size and proximity to urban centers. First consideration of acceptable changes to this state of affairs must be: What makes the Chattooga headwaters unique, how did it get this way, and what will happen to those unique values under even a partial implementation of this new initiative.

Lastly, I believe that we should look closely at the changes brought about in the lower reaches of Chattooga by steadily increasing float traffic, building over the years. If this measure goes through, a similar if admittedly less intensely intrusive regime of human pre-occupation will become established above Highway 28, just as it has below. The result will be a changed--and substantially diminished--ecological "carry capacity" in the headwaters.

Social conditions:

My comments in this section have to do with the upper Chattooga as a wild "sanctuary" and as a place of wilderness instruction.

One of the best boaters I know referred to Overflow Creek as his "church." I can respect and honor that. I would do nothing whatever to ever jeopardize that place or, likewise, the sense of connection that that person has with Overflow Creek.

There are portions of the headwaters--more than one--that are also a kind of "church" to other, non-boating Chattooga users. These places, like Overflow, are kinds of "wild sanctuaries." These places, and the experience and sense of communion and connection that these places provide should be safeguarded.

I believe that this USFS analysis process should take into consideration how this initiative--and the possible drastic influx of floaters that results--will affect the social values of those seeking sanctuary and retreat in the headwaters. Such values currently available north of 28 bridge will be essentially lost under this initiative. If Overflow is a church, the Rock Gorge is a cathedral. We should, I believe, do everything to ensure that both these places retain the qualities that make them so special to some users.

Also, with regard to the river as a place of wilderness instruction for young and old (but especially for young people): The floating stretches allow opportunities for invaluable wilderness lessons for young people in navigating a wild mountain torrent. The headwaters, under current management regulations, provide for equally important, if different, kinds of wilderness lessons—lessons about human limits and vulnerabilities that generations of humans learned at large on the land, for thousands of years, and which have only begun to be substantially forgotten in recent, motorized times. We need both kinds of experience, and both kinds of places.

Initial indications of what it would take to manage for these experiences (managerial conditions):

We can look to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act for guidance here, Section 10, Management Direction:

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 aesthetic, scenic, historic, archaeological, 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.

I respectfully submit that a singularly important question that the USFS must deliberate in reviewing this issue is, "Will the suspension of restrictions against floating above Highway 28 inaugurate a level and intensity of new visitation above Highway 28 that would "substantially interfere with public use and enjoyment of...the special attributes of the area?"

I would argue that inevitably it will, to the extent that it will facilitate new and easy access to an area whose altogether unique and irreplaceable "special attributes" have accrued as a result of reasonable limitations on human travel imposed upon the headwater reaches by the governing agency, acting entirely within the letter and spirit of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

The river was zoned in order to protect and provide for varying kinds and intensities of human use. The USFS inaugurated reasonable, justifiable limitations on means of travel to ensure that certain kinds of traditional river experiences would be retained after designation and throughout the increase in use that the agency knew would follow designation. Those zoning restrictions were and are entirely within the USFS legal purview, and the same restrictions, to my mind, are even more important today than they were 30 years ago, when river floaters were far, far fewer, and paddling sports not

nearly as popular or well developed. Moreover, the restriction against floating above 28 is, after all, only imposed upon the means of travel, not upon the user. There is not a single boater whose use of the Chattooga headwaters is categorically restricted. All citizens have equal access under the laws and regulations of the USFS.

The zoning solution arrived upon more than 30 years ago has worked well in maintaining a delicate balance of human use of a rare, limited and ever-diminishing resource. I would ask that the Forest Service focus their deliberations more on the critical importance of maintaining that overall balance for future generations of "users", and less on the urgent importunities of any one sub-group of current users.

John,

The Sumter NF website has the following posted info:

[Comments Written by Participants at Public Meeting on November 17](#)

These were actually the VERBAL comments by participants as recorded at the tables by FS people on laptops. You collected the WRITTEN comments by participants. Please post those also.

Thanks, Doug

Posted on Tuesday, November 29, 2005 at 21:04 Hours (Server time).

From: Fred Johnson
Email: fjohnson39@sc.rr.com

Telephone Number: 803-499-3773

Street Address:
5186B S. Elder Dr
Shaw AFB, SC 29152

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

Please do not allow boating on the upper Chatooga River. Yes, boaters have thier rights....but not at the expense of fly fishermen who enjoy the solitude of that beautiful stretch of river.

Upper Chattooga River - Recreation Use Form

Name (optional)___Art Shick, West Union, SC

1. What is the most important activity on the trip? (be specific - Ex: Backcountry Fishing, Backpacking, Camping, etc) [Backcountry Fishing](#)

2. What other activities would you do on the trip? (Ex: Hiking, Wildlife Viewing, Hunting, Wild Flowering, Birding, etc) [Hiking & wildlife viewing](#)
3. Where would you go? List the segment(s) you would use and describe your travel route (if any). [28 bridge to Reed Cr, Reed Cr to Pig Pen, Simms Fields, Upper Steps to BFR, BFR to Ellicott Rock](#)
4. When (what time of year) could you take this trip? (Please specify months, season, or "all year"). [This measures entire season.] [All year, though fewer trips in winter](#)
5. When is the best time of year to take this type of trip? How often do you take (or would you take) this trip per year? [This measures the "prime season".] [March to June, & Sept to November. 20 plus trips a year.](#)
6. How many people (include yourself) would be in your group on this trip? [Two](#)
7. How long would your trip be? (Days or hours) [4 to 8 hours](#)
8. Describe the most important attributes of the trip - the conditions or characteristics of the trip that make it high quality. [Solitude, quiet beauty of the upper Chattooga River.](#)
9. Describe the specific concerns you have about how other recreation users in the area may affect your trips. [Degradation of my experience on the river by interfering with my enjoyment of backcountry fishing by boat traffic.](#)

Art Shick

521 Wintergreen Dr.

West Union, SC 29696

fishmor@AOL.COM

John Cleaves

I use the river above the 28 Bridge for fly fishing and believe opening it up to rafting and kayaking would destroy the area. It's now a remote area with wildlife and clear unpolluted waters. Please keep it the way it is today.

Bob Womsley

PO Box 1899

Highlands, NC 28741

For your info, I sent this out to some friends and family. Doug

Even if you couldn't attend tonight's meeting, you can still have your views heard.

To read the handouts at tonight's meeting, click on: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/fms/> and scroll down.

The two items marked **NEW** are the handouts.

Read only the section of your primary interest (i.e. Backcountry Angling or Frontcountry Angling)

In Handout A - tell the FS what 'desired conditions' you think should be changed (i.e. water level, encounters discussion, etc).

In Handout B - tell the FS which of the 'measurable indicators' are most important to you (i.e. fishing disturbance, catch rate, etc).

Submit your comments to: John Cleeves, E-mail jcleeves@fs.fed.us

Do it right now! The user comments will be compiled and posted Dec. 7th on the Sumter NF website

Gentlemen, I am a 74 year old fly fisherman, having enjoyed the peace and quiet of this river since the 1950,s! My other outdoor experiences include back packing ,hiking, tent camping,and occasional day walks in the north Ga. mountains,in conjunction with my volunteer activities as a member of several environmental org., concerned with the the continued protection and maintainence of the subject resource. Sure,I can find such near wilderness areas by taking a 1500 mile trip to our wonderful mountainous west,at great expense in terms of time and money. That option,unavailable to many, leads me to urge your team to maintain the close-in wilderness experience now offered by this " Wild and scenic" river.....The Chattooga, now in it,s present balanced usage configuration! As populations move geographically and also age demographically, while moving towards these no. Ga.streams, these water resources will only see increased usage by the present user groups, that expect the qualities of peace and quiet to be there, as before! Please, do not mix in fast/noisy moving water users with the more ordered and contemplative present users! Thank you for your thoughtful consideration, Roy E.Lowe.....Clarkesville, Ga. P.S. Since all the other users are users of designated " tracks" : Hikers on trails,campers on sites, trout fishermen in the water and picknicers at tables.....mostly under control,by regulation,and hardly a people drawing spectator sport.....keep in mind the tendency for crowds of spectators to want to view action water sports, such as paddling..... with the predictable bank damage, litter,and added usage of parking! Not to mention the guaranteed paddler tendency to enter and exit the stream over and over,at the most desirable fast water sites " shooting the rapids",thereby encreasing riparian bank damage/trail usage,as well as stream bottom impacts { invertebrate site damage plus siltation}!
Thanks, R.

Attachment I

REASONS FOR MAINTAINING THE BOATING BAN From the Angler's Perspective

Backcountry trout anglers may walk in an hour or more to seek a sense of remoteness. They generally space themselves so as not to infringe on another anglers' solitude experiences. This is not unlike boaters spacing themselves for the same reason, so that they can transport their envelope of solitude

with them. The difference is that when a boater passes by an angler, the boater does not feel infringed upon and it does not disrupt the boater's rhythm. From the angler's perspective, however, the boater has not only invaded his envelope of solitude but he has completely disrupted his rhythm. And since the boaters often space themselves, the angler may experience this invasion every few minutes, resulting in frustration and conflict.

The Upper Chattooga is unique. Clemson University's recent 'Chattooga Trout Anglers Survey' concluded that similar trout catching experiences and good water quality exist at the Davidson, Nantahala, Tuckaseegee, and Chauga Rivers. Three of these have roads running beside them and the other has numerous drive-in access points. However, the Chattooga backcountry angling experience is truly unique. For the angler, there is simply no other place with the unique combination of the large size free-flowing stream, the excellent trail access, the backcountry solitude experience, the remoteness, the awesome beauty, and the quality of trout fishing that is found in this boating free section of the Chattooga River. That is like comparing a fine 5-Star restaurant with O'Charley's, Shoney's, Captain D's, and Burger King! There is a lot more to the Chattooga backcountry experience than catching trout!

American Whitewater, the boater's organization, says the Upper Chattooga is the only section of stream on Forest Service (FS) lands, nationwide, that is closed to boating. If true, that really does make it 'unique' and is reason enough to preserve this last section of FS stream free of boating! We owe a special thanks to the FS planners of 30 years ago for their foresight in protecting the backcountry solitude of the Upper Chattooga for future generations.

Preserve the solitude. **The solitude of the limited access area above Highway 28 should be a quality to be protected instead of being further developed. Removal of the boating ban would be like putting a 'road' (for boats) down the middle of the river.**

Minimize user conflicts. Don't bring the user conflicts to this river section. Kayaks, canoes, and duckies will all be competing with anglers, birders, hikers, and nature enthusiasts for their own river experience. With the explosion in popularity of 'extreme' sports, it only follows that overuse and conflict will quickly overcome the headwaters of the Chattooga River. Boaters are currently embroiled in conflicts in the lower river concerning river use allocation. The present zoning line at Highway 28 is a compromise resolution to the angler-boater conflicts of 30 years ago.

Once an activity is established it is very hard to change it. It may start out small in numbers, but how likely is it to grow and at what growth rate? The number of people kayaking in the South increased 85.8% between 1995 and 2000. What will be the whitewater boating use level in 10 or 15 years? Just look at the concerns with boating overuse in the lower river.

Protect the Ellicott Rock Wilderness Area. This area is presently suffering from overuse and abuse. It does not seem like a good management plan to add another user group, the boaters.

Boaters are not being singled out as the only user group excluded from this Wilderness area. Horseback riding and recreational panning for gold are user groups allowed in most Wilderness areas, but it is excluded in the ERWA. Mountain biking is another user group not allowed in the Wilderness.

The River section above Highway 28 is not like Overflow Creek. Overflow Creek is a smaller stream. Whitewater boating can only be done during large storm surges when the creek is un-fishable and muddy due to Clear Creek and Big Creek influents. User conflicts have not been a problem. The Chattooga above Highway 28 is a much larger stream. Therefore, anglers and boaters would be in the river at the same time more often with the potential for conflicts.

Doing what is best for the Chattooga. The river corridor from Highway 28 to Burrells Ford and the river corridor up stream of the East Fork confluence are the only sections of the Chattooga that have not been irreparable impacted by management for too many user groups. We have a chance to preserve and protect these sections.

Summary:

Each time an angler encounters a boater coming downstream towards him, he has to reel in his line, move out of the way, and wait for the boater to paddle past. The angler's rhythm has been disrupted. The boat and the paddling commotion have probably spooked the trout he was seeking. The angler either has to wait for some period of time and hope the trout calm down and begin feeding again, or move on and search for other trout that have not been spooked. And since boaters space themselves, about the time the trout calm down, here comes another boater! The intrusion and frustration the angler experiences is not unlike the experience of having a discourteous angler jump in just upstream and start fishing. This also can lead to a confrontation.

The Ellicott Rock Wilderness Area anglers would suffer further degradation of their so-called 'wilderness experience'.

To reduce the angler-boater conflicts and congestion in the area, sadly, the Burrells Ford anglers might again be encouraged to go to other places by moving the 'Put and Take' stocking to other sites.

The Delayed Harvest anglers would experience the disruptive angler-boater encounters, frustration, and confrontations; some anglers would simply abandon the Chattooga and go back to fishing in other Delayed Harvest areas on other streams.

The backcountry anglers would be the greatest losers; there is nowhere else they could go for their 'envelope of solitude' experience that has the unique combination of the large size free-flowing stream the excellent trail access, the remoteness, the awesome beauty, and the quality of trout fishing that is found in this boating free section of the Chattooga River.

Once an activity is established it is very hard to change it. It may start out small in numbers, but how likely is it to grow and at what growth rate?

As anglers, we don't want to compromise our "envelope of solitude" by the intrusion of boaters on the last 14 miles of the Chattooga River available to our quiet enjoyment. We don't want more conflict, we want due consideration for our enjoyment of the Wild & Scenic Chattooga River.

Maybe we should be asking, "What is best for the Upper Chattooga?" Is adding another user group "best"? Or is it "best" to protect and preserve the solitude and uniqueness of the only section of the Chattooga that has not been adversely impacted by conflict and management for too many uses?

We believe maintaining the boating ban above Highway 28 is also what is the best for the Chattooga.

Submitted by: Doug Adams, a Chattooga River angler since 1955.

Attachment G

Other Boating Bans and Restrictions

"Streams and whitewater—Water attracts a wide variety of visitors, including swimmers, viewers of fish, anglers, and users of muscle- and motor-powered watercraft. The possibilities of conflict are obvious. For the most part, all the uses just listed are incompatible with one another."

"Conflict resolution may involve both zoning and education. When the source of conflict is goal interference, it is more appropriate to consider zoning by time, space, or activity. Zoning can ensure that different types of users are physically separated."

(From "The Southern Forest Resource Assessment"; Southern Research Station, USDA Forest Service, and Southern Region, USDA Forest Service; Oct. 2002; section "Potential Conflicts Between Different Forms of Recreation")

A whitewater boating ban on all streams and rivers in **Yellowstone National Park** has been in effect since 1950. The ban was revisited by the park's ID planning team from 1985 to 1988. The team collected baseline data on the potential impacts should the ban be lifted. In 1988 the ID team issued a 110-page report titled *"Boating on Yellowstone Rivers: An Analysis and Assessment"*. The end result was the ban was maintained based mainly on concerns for crowding and aesthetics, according to an American Whitewater report. But the NPS spokesperson also sites conflicts with other park visitors, such as anglers. "We're looking at ways to reduce impacts rather than to increase or add activities," she said. "Once an activity is established it is very hard to change it, so you don't want to jump into something." "It's much harder to fix it than it is to not allow it at all," she said.

Then there is the **Kern River** situation in CA. American Whitewater has responded to the scoping letter concerning the proposed amendment to the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (FLRMP) for the Sequoia National Forest. American Whitewater expressed discontent with the current reservation system of 15 non-commercial persons per day on this Wild & Scenic stretch of river. They say "Only 15 citizens are permitted to float the Forks each day, whereas no other public, non-commercial forest users in the river corridor have restricted day use."

The USFS announced plans to cut whitewater boating by 50 percent on the **Middle Fork**, and by 30 percent on the main **Salmon River** in Idaho. The final environmental impact statement (EIS) will guide the future management of the 2.3 million-acre Frank Church Wilderness for the next decade. Concerns about overcrowding drove the proposed cutbacks, according to FS wilderness planners.

On the **Gallatin River** in MT, commercial and noncommercial whitewater enthusiasts compete for space at the same time both groups confront fly-fishing enthusiasts. On the **Beaverhead** and **Big Hole** rivers, anglers and floaters have to work around a 2-year-old rule that allocates river space based on residency and whether users are wading, floating, and with a guide. "Combat fishing" is the way one state Fish, Wildlife & Parks Department commissioner described it. Since 1989, recreationists on the **Smith River** south of Great Falls have had to apply for permits to float that popular river. And the **Missouri** is getting so crowded that more than one outfitter has suggested it might be time to consider restricting its use.

The **AuSable** Main Branch is the busiest canoe stream in the state of MI, at least in the upper section. It also has the state's worst outbreak of the beer-guzzling aluminum-hatch rental canoeists, at least on summer weekends. It's also a premiere trout stream, and that also causes more user conflicts.

In **CO** there are court cases pending concerning public boating through private lands. Several of the streams involved are managed as private fishing clubs. It's the same old angler – boater conflict, but this time on private property.

In **Tallulah Gorge State Park** in Rabun County (GA), during 2002 there were 26 days with "Aesthetic Releases (200 cfs)" of water in which whitewater boating is not allowed and permits are issued to hikers to use the trail to Hurricane Falls. There were 10 days with "Whitewater Boating Releases (500/700 cfs)" when boating is allowed on the lower 1½ miles of the gorge and no hiking permits are issued. Even on those 10 days, boating is ban on the upper gorge through Hurricane Falls for safety reasons.

With the recent explosion in popularity of 'extreme' sports and new developments in equipment, the greatest increase in kayaking has occurred since 1995.

| Participating Activity | 1995 % | No. Participating | 2000 % | No. | |
|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--------|-----------|----------------------|
| | <u>Participating</u> | <u>1995</u> | | | <u>Participating</u> |
| <u>2000</u> | <u>% Change</u> | | | | |
| Kayaking | 1.1% | 702,200 | 1.9% | 1,304,700 | 85.8% |
| Canoeing | 6.7% | 4,277,200 | 7.5% | 5,150,000 | 20.4% |

(From "The Southern Forest Resource Assessment"; Southern Research Station, USDA Forest Service, and Southern Region, USDA Forest Service; Oct. 2002; section "Potential Conflicts Between Different Forms of Recreation"; Table 11.1--Percent of the population participating, number of participants in outdoor activities, and percent change from 1995 to 2000, Southern Region. Source: 1995 and 2000 National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE), USDA Forest Service, Athens, GA.)

Question: Can the upper Chattooga support the future demands of just the present user groups and sustain its "backcountry" qualities?

Question: Is it in the best interest for the protection and preservation of the upper Chattooga resource to add another user group at this time?

Information assembled by: Doug Adams

Attachment D

HISTORY OF THE BOATING BAN From the Angler's Perspective

Prior to 1970, boating was minimal. In 1966, the Regional Forester set aside the Ellicott Rock Scenic Area. The GA DNR and SC DNR managed the Chattooga River as a trout fishery from Ellicott Rock to the Highway 76 Bridge. GA DNR alone stocked 93,800 catchable trout in 1966 and stocked 98,000 trout in 1967 (from page 9, "*A Fisheries Survey of the Upper Chattooga River*" by J. P. Durniak, GA DNR, dated September 1989). In 1969, the stocking totaled 104,000 trout (from page 20, "*Wild and Scenic River Study Report – Chattooga River*" dated June 1971). These stockings took place at numerous road access points between Highway 76 and the East Fork.

Backcountry anglers experienced solitude and good trout fishing between Highways 76 and 28, except from June to early September when the water warmed-up. During these warmer months, the anglers experienced a few boaters (canoes and rafts), swimmers and tubers (at the access points), and enjoyed excellent redeye bass fishing. Wade fishing below the confluence of the West Fork was limited to periods of low to normal water levels. A few anglers fished from boats downstream of the West Fork confluence.

In 1970, a public meeting was held in Clayton concerning the proposal of the Wild & Scenic designation. Anglers were aware that this would mean closing of the roads and the stocking access points, but protection of the river was more important. Of over 1,000 comments, only 4 were opposed to the proposal (from page 106, "*Chattooga Sourcebook*", by Clemson University, 1993).

In 1971, Congress designated the Ellicott Rock Scenic Area and the remaining road accesses were closed. New easy trails were constructed and helicopter stocking was begun with one drop per year in the East Fork pool. As a Scenic Area, use was light, consisting mostly of fishing with limited camping (from page F-3, "*LRMP Sumter N.F.*", 1985). Also in 1971, the movie "*Deliverance*" was being filmed on the Chattooga and boating use increased to roughly 800 trips (from page 107, "*Chattooga Sourcebook*", by Clemson University, 1993).

In 1972, "*Deliverance*" was released.

In 1973, "*Sports Afield*" has a feature article about boating and fishing the Chattooga, attracting even more out of state river users.

In 1974, the river was designated a National Wild & Scenic River and there were roughly 21,000 float trips (from page 107, "*Chattooga Sourcebook*", by Clemson University, 1993).

The backcountry anglers' remote solitude experience was lost and conflicts broke out between anglers and boaters at numerous locations, mostly below Highway 28 at stocking points such as Earl's Ford, Sandy Ford, and Lick Log. Conflicts included shouting, rock throwing, snagging of boats with treble hooks, fist fights, gun play, slashing of rafts, etc.

GA and SC discontinued stocking below the Long Bottom Ford. At the time, we thought it was because some of the access roads were being scheduled for closure and because some of the anglers had already gone elsewhere. We left because of the loss of solitude and to avoid getting involved in the conflicts along the lower river between locals (anglers) and outsiders (boaters). Actually, as we learned 20+ years later, the Forest Service had written a letter to SC DNR and GA DNR asking that the stocking of trout be discontinued below Long Bottom Ford to discourage use of the area by anglers. This was the first step by the Forest Service in the segregation and zoning of river users.

In 1975, Ellicott Rock Scenic Area was re-designated as the Ellicott Rock Wilderness Area (ERWA). Like a magnet, the new Wilderness label soon made ERWA the most visited Wilderness in the entire Forest Service system (measured as visitors/acre/year). However, only 13% of those visitors were anglers (from page 29, "*Ellicott Rock Wilderness Management Plan*", prepared 1982). Between Burrells Ford and Highway 28, the Forest Service was closing roads, constructing trails, and issuing new trail maps. Above Highway 28, the number of boaters was increasing, as was the number of hikers and backpackers.

The Wilderness designation required the termination of the helicopter-stocking program above Burrells Ford. All truck stocking was discontinued between Burrells Ford and the lower Nicholson Fields. The GA DNR trout stocking in 1975 was only 25,000 fingerlings (from page 9, "*A Fisheries Survey of the Upper Chattooga River*" by J. P. Durniak, GA DNR, dated September 1989). This was the beginning of a steep decline in the quality of the angling experience (solitude and catch rate) in the upper river (above Highway 28), especially in the Ellicott Rock Wilderness Area.

In 1976, the Development Plan for the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River was published in the Federal Register on March 22, 1976.

Under "**Fishing**" is the following paragraph (Page 11849):

"Very little fishing is done from floatable craft. Most fishing is done either from the bank or by wading in the stream. The recent increase in floaters using the river has had a detrimental effect on the fishing experience. Conflicts have developed on certain sections of the river where floaters and fishermen use the same waters"

Under "**Fish and Wildlife**" is the following (Page 11850):

" - - Fish stocking will be permitted at Highway 28 Bridge, Burrells Ford, Bullpen Bridge, Long Bottom Ford on the river - - "

Under "**Nicholson Fields (Recreation)**" is the following (Page 11852):

" - - - This area remains a favorite spot for trout fishing. This location is the source of some of the best trout fishing in both South Carolina and Georgia. Floating will be prohibited above Highway 28 which includes the Nicholson Fields area."

This document ties it all together: *increase in boating / detrimental effect on the fishing experience / conflicts / zoning' by no stocking below Long Bottom & no boating*

above 28. This was the formal step taken by the Forest Service to reach a compromise. Boating is permitted below Highway 28 and the values to be emphasized along the upper stretches of the river are solitude, fishing, hiking, and nature viewing.

By the 1980s, the anglers were relegated to the headwaters to avoid conflicts with boaters. The boating ban above Highway 28 and no fish stocking below Long Bottom Ford was confirmed in the paragraph titled **Fisheries** on page 30 of the “*Chattooga Wild And Scenic River Management Plan*” dated July 11, 1980. It reads: “ - - *Floating north of Highway 28 Bridge is prohibited and fishing is encouraged in this section.*”

Again anglers had seen their solitude compromised by the new and easy trails in the Ellicott Rock Wilderness Area. An area where “use was light, consisting mostly of fishing” had gone to “most visited Wilderness in the Forest Service” in only 5 years! The Forest Service reacted by assigning a Wilderness Ranger to the Burrells Ford area to enforce the boating ban and to cope with the overuse and abuse of the ERWA, and he was very effective.

The backcountry fishery management program was almost non-existent.

Present Situation: The Wilderness Ranger was removed over 15 years ago when the number of annual visitors to the ERWA began to decrease. Due to lack of enforcement, some boating returned to the river above Highway 28. The type of boaters and the few numbers that are being encountered between Bull Pen and Burrells Ford really do not constitute much of a problem. They appear to be experienced kayakers with good equipment and safety gear. However, below Burrells Ford we have encountered people with wooden jon boats, open aluminum and fiberglass canoes, car top aluminum fishing boats, and K-mart plastic rafts, usually with a cooler of beer. They have no helmets or wet suits. They don't have a clue about what they are getting into.

Fortunately, in 1985 the FS, DNR, and TU from SC, GA and NC responded to the fisheries situation with the formation of the Chattooga River Coalition. As a result, now the ERWA is managed for ‘wild trout’ where catch and release is encouraged; the easily accessed Burrells Ford area is managed ‘put and take’; the backcountry between Burrells Ford and Reed Creek is being managed ‘sub-adult for put and grow’; from Reed Creek to Highway 28 is managed ‘delayed harvest’; and the easily accessed stretch below Highway 28 through Long Bottom is managed ‘put and take’. Those visitors that seek the backcountry angling and are willing to walk-in up to an hour can now experience the solitude of a boating free Wild and Scenic River plus have a reasonable chance to catch either wild or hold-over trout.

Appendix M, page 16, subsection C of the 1985 LRMP Sumter N.F. states that:

The Chattooga is considered to be the best trout stream in South Carolina and one of the best in Georgia. It has the size and volume to permit quality fly fishing in a very attractive setting. This is especially true on the undeveloped section north of Highway 28 Bridge where floating use is not permitted to provide quality trout fishing. The upper portion has colder water and is more conducive to natural regeneration. Fishing pressure, especially near the bridges where access is good, is heavier than natural reproduction can replace. These areas are stocked by the states using hatchery grown trout.

Information assembled by Doug Adams

Posted on Friday, December 2, 2005 at 9:34 Hours (Server time).

From: James Michael Harvell
Email: Rollcaster@hotmail.com

Telephone Number: 787 529 8556

Street Address:
35 Green Valley Drive Greenville SC 29671

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

I fly fish the section above Highway 28 during the Delay Harvest period Nov to May. Boat traffic during this period would make fly fishing the Delayed Harvest section next to impossible.

Other problems would be access point for floating?

Water level during non Delay Harvest period (May 15 to November 15) the summer and fall too low for boating, resulting in stream bottom damage.

This is a wild & scenic river allowing boat traffic only below highway 28 supports this classification much better.

Mr. Cheeves,

Regarding your Handout A, I have comments about the following paragraph from Backcountry Angling, page 5:

“Encounters with other anglers/waders, boaters and other recreationists are such that solitude and fishing activity are minimally affected (e.g. few encounters and minimal spooked fish).” *Due to the size of the river in most places, if you are wading in the river, as most backcountry anglers do, when one or a group of boaters come through, you are a lot more than “minimally affected”!!!! You are likely to be abruptly forced out of the river with the fish spooked for 1-2 hours. The boater is quickly gone but the angler is stuck with the significant disruption!*

“Boating never comes close to the use levels in the lower Chattooga.” *True, but irrelevant since there is very little backcountry fishing and wading on the lower Chattooga. It doesn’t take many of these to completely ruin a day’s fishing on the upper river which is the only good places for backcountry fishing on the Chattooga.*

“All users encountered are non-motorized and non-commercial, have a high regard for the experiences of fellow recreationists, and have a strong environmental ethic.” ***I don't question the environmental ethic of boaters and they may think they have a high regard for “fellow recreationists,” but regardless of their “regard,” when they come upon wading backcountry anglers, they often have limited options, incentives or maybe even desire to avoid a major disruption to the fisherman.***

“There are no tubers or rafters. All users are unified against the major threats to this pristine river corridor – development, and water quality degradation.” ***I agree.***

Regarding your Handout B, I suggest the following re prioritization for the 11 items related to Backcountry Angling, page 5:

Backcountry Angling (Current)

1. Total encounters (number of other groups seen per day; count repeats if out of sight for 15 minutes)
2. Maximum group size (size of largest group encountered)
3. Average group size (size of average group encountered)
4. Parking availability (percent of trips preferred parking lot is unavailable//full)
5. 9-point crowding scale
6. Fishing encounters per day (number of groups seen per day while fishing)
7. Fishing competition (number of times angler passed up a good fishing site that was occupied)
8. Fishing disturbances (number of times angler per day had to stop fishing because of an encounter)
9. Fishing success (number caught/kept per hour)
10. Fishing disturbance time (total minutes per day anglers could not fish during or shortly after encounters)
11. Litter/human waste – number of times per day users observed litter or human waste impacts.

Backcountry Angling (My Proposal)

1. Fishing disturbances (number of times angler per day had to stop fishing because of an encounter)
2. Fishing disturbance time (total minutes per day anglers could not fish during or shortly after encounters)
3. Total encounters (number of other groups seen per day; count repeats if out of sight for 15 minutes)
4. Fishing encounters per day (number of groups seen per day while fishing)
5. Litter/human waste – number of times per day users observed litter or human waste impacts.
6. Maximum group size (size of largest group encountered)
7. Average group size (size of average group encountered)
8. Parking availability (percent of trips preferred parking lot is unavailable//full)
9. 9-point crowding scale

10. Fishing competition (number of times angler passed up a good fishing site that was occupied)
11. Fishing success (number caught/kept per hour)

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sid Elliott

I think the MOST interesting thing I got out of the meeting last night, was Bob Kinder proudly telling me he cut rock out of Bull Sluice, after the tree was removed a few years ago, and how cool it looked on video. He took it out because he felt it was in the way. He and Jeff Dover admitted they did it. Granted it is difficult to see on tape, with all the air bubbles, but definitely there. They have a copy. Do they have permission to change the river on whim?

Charlene

Since we cannot change reality, let us change the eyes which see reality.
-Nikos Kazantzakis

Charlene Coleman
American Whitewater
Regional Coordinator

Definitions:

Vehicle: Any means by or which someone travels or something is carried or conveyed, a means of conveyance or transport.

Kayak: A canoe type of boat (or vehicle)

Boat: A small, usually open water craft

Questions

Why allow one type of vehicle or boat and not others. Would this be considered fair and equal treatment? Why are we discussing one type of boat to the exclusion of others? Is this sustainable?

Why should I, as a fisherman, not be allowed to use a vehicle to gain access along the course of the upper Chattooga River also? The roads are blocked. I'm 83 years old and could soon use the help of a vehicle but would vote against it as an intrusion on a very rare and fragile spot.

If vehicles are allowed why would it not be permissible to rent one? Why not have buses going back and forth to put in and take out?

It has been suggested by the boaters that the upper river would be used only during high water levels when fishing may not be as desirable. Is their not a segment of their group designating themselves as "Creekers"?

Why is American Whitewater so intent on using the upper Chattooga when there are rivers and streams all about with put in and take out spots to use to say nothing of the great stretch below the highway 28 bridge?

As fishermen we have been placed in the light of obstructionist, protecting our favorite trout stream from intrusion of others. Actually we welcome and enjoy others. It's the intrusion of vehicles that, if allowed, will change the whole experience for everyone else.

Allowing vehicles (boats) in this section of the river will bring a deluge of traffic altering the ecology, increasing the demands and expense of the Forest Service, would necessitate more parking and sanitary facilities, would make search and rescue very difficult further damaging the environment surrounding as well as the river itself.

As fishermen we are frequently asked why we like this avocation. It's where it takes us. Otherwise a trout farm would be less trouble. There are not many spots like this available to us or any one else in need of a special place, pristine, quiet, wild and scenic free of intrusion by vehicles of any sort.

Denis Galvin, retired deputy director of the National Park Service said "The national parks do not have to sustain all recreations; that is why we have various other federal, state, local and private providers. The present Park Service should keep this in mind"

I wish to thank the members of the Park Service for their time and effort expended in fulfilling this mandate from Washington. I hope it will clarify things for those on high.

Lea Richmond MD
130 Richmond Lane
Lakemont, Georgia 30552

Dear John,

I have read much of the latest information from the posting 11/30/2005 for the 12/1 meeting. I would like to add some brief comments.

Although backpacking on the upper Chattooga River is an important element for me and my wife, it is not the most important to us. I would like to comment: however, that the solitude we experience when backpacking there is the most critical. We travel the USA when we can, spending time in the Rockies. Our favorite; however, is the Upper Chattooga River. Nowhere east of the Rockies is there such a spot to backpack and fish. It would be ruined by having boaters moving through the river and disturbing the "private zone" of the intimate and close environs of The River. Further downriver, where the river is bigger and the crowds prevail, boating, etc. can do little to harm the personal space -- it exists downriver, only marginally.

Our real attraction to the Upper Chattooga is the Backcountry angling!

The solitude currently available on the upper Chattooga is legendary. What place, so close to major metropolitan areas, exists where one can anticipate the early breakfast by the river and the rise of the trout "over there, just across the river, by that rock". The trout will be there until he is disturbed. Nature's clock is not upset much by backpackers or even careful backcountry anglers passing or wading by on occasion. But, boaters will put fish down for quite a while. And, if boaters or even very noisy waders come by, the trout may be put down for the entire hatch. Such is the way on small rivers like the Upper Chattooga. Solitude, by definition, requires a relatively undisturbed physical environment. That environment has been created there and nurtured for many years. To consider a change is good; to make a change would, in my judgment, be very bad for our country, for Georgia, South Carolina and the Southeast.

I believe that the Upper Chattooga has made a major impact in my life and has allowed me to not only accept our growing population and society but has helped me build the perspective to help it become better. To allow the competitive, often times noisy and always disruptive environment of boating would be a real sad day for the Upper Chattooga and the US Forest Service.

Thanks for asking for comments. May you and the USFS have great wisdom.

Don Atkinson

(419) 882-3533 (Home & Fax)

(419) 450-3199 (Cell)
donatkinson@att.net (email)

I would like to comment on the proposed change to allow boating on the upper Chattooga.

I oppose this change for the following reasons: Allowing boating will seriously impact this area through more trash, reduction in the experience of solitude, cause more noise and other disturbances to the wilderness experience.

This area is quite unique in providing a true wilderness experience. Any change to the present regulations would be detrimental.

I am sure there are many responsible boaters who would use this area. However, as in some of the comments some admit to already using this section illegally. Boats allow transporting more stuff and more will be left on the river. Most boaters who are commenting are probably skilled and responsible. This does not prevent the unskilled and irresponsible from also using this section also which could cause a danger to them in this remote area as well as impacting the unique qualities that is now enjoyed.

Pat Pattillo
416 Crabapple LN Dahlonega, Ga 30533

Posted on Saturday, December 3, 2005 at 16:39 Hours (Server time).

From: Ray Gentry
Email: regentry@earthlink.net

Telephone Number: 404-680-6736

Street Address:
264 Laurelwood
Sautee Nacoochee, GA 30571

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

I am positive the original decision of the USFS as to contuning the boating ban is the correct decision.

This water is smaall, narrow, restrictive and will not support boating without adversely affecting all other users.

Keeping the ban in place to protect the river and allow peaceful harmony on this stream is the only appropriate decision.

RG

Dear Mr. Cleeves,

There was a typo in my previous e-mail submission. The correction is in bold below. Thank you.

Unfortunately, I was not able to attend the recent public hearing. However, I have read the recent handouts entitled [Handout A, Recreation Opportunities and their Desired Conditions](#) and Handout B, Indicators by Opportunities.

I am concerned none of them seemed to address the comments previously made regarding the use of the upper river by families. Families with small children enjoy picnicing beside the river, swimming and wading in the river and generally enjoying the solitude of the wilderness. This is particularly true at the base of the numerous waterfalls. Fisherman encountering such families can easily walk around them and avoid unnecessary conflict.

Boaters cannot. Boaters, by their thrill seeking nature, are likely to come rocketing over falls and around bends in the river, only to encounter families, sometimes with small children, playing in the shallows. Tragedy could result. You have to ask why the boaters need to have access to this section of river when they have literally hundreds, if not thousands, of miles of larger, more appropriate, river to enjoy throughout Western North Carolina, Upstate South Carolina and North Georgia. It seems totally appropriate for the Forest Service to continue **the boating ban** of the upper river to avoid this obvious conflict. Families with small children do not play in lower section of river because of the danger of the

water and the conflict with the boaters. I would urge the Forest Service to keep the boaters out of the upper river to protect these families.

I am also concerned that the Forest Service seems to think that only experienced boaters will use the upper river if it is opened. Surely common sense and past experience would show that this assumption is false. In fact, if the Forest Service opens the upper river to boaters, you will have all manner of skill levels and types of watercraft attempting to navigate this inherently unnavigable stretch of water. Again, disaster will result.

You know, or should know, that both inexperienced and experienced boaters will suffer serious injury, and possibly death, as a result of encounters with strainers, waterfalls and hidden hydraulics on this stretch of river. Because of the very small size of the water in this section, both experienced and inexperienced boaters will mistakenly think they can safely make it down. While the lower river has obvious danger from its size, the upper river will likely lure unsuspecting boaters to serious danger. The Forest Service has a legal and ethical obligation to keep that from happening. Imagine a 12 year old child innocently paddling down the river in an inflatable Funyak who gets tragically pulled to his death over the Corkscrew falls. Your assumption that regulations will prevent this from happening is simply false.

Thank you again for your careful consideration of this important issue.

Best regards,

Wyatt Stevens

Wyatt S. Stevens
One West Pack Sq.
Suite 1100
Asheville, NC 28801
Direct dial 828-258-6992
Fax 828-253-7200

Dear Mr. Cleeves-

Thank you for soliciting input on use of the upper Chattooga river. My family and I enjoy the hiking trails in that area every spring, summer, and fall, and swimming in the river. At these times it is a great pleasure to have a wilderness experience - hiking on the established trails and having a wilderness experience of undisturbed solitude while swimming are great experiences for us. I would not like to see any changes that would degrade that experience. I am VERY concerned about this challenge-focused boating. Aside from dodging these guys, I do nature photography and have noticed that their boats leave permanent "crayon marks" on the rocks that they hit.

Fishing looks like a pleasant and compatible experience there as well, but my kids aren't interested so I'll leave that for others.

Thanks for accepting my thoughts.

Sincerely,

John Carothers

Here are my comments on the Upper Chattooga:

What:

I fly fish, study stream entomology, enjoy solitude, nature watch and picnic on the Upper Chattooga River.

Where:

All sections within 5 miles of public access

When:

January to December with April to August prime months.

How Often:

20 trips a year

For How Long:

Four to seven Hours.

Attributes of a High Quality Trip:

Fly fishing quality stream runs and holes without outside disturbance like boating / swimming in this small stream is critical to a fisherman. Resting and reading a good fishing spot to get to a large trout is quality time on the Chattooga. Hikers, birders and other fisherman are respectful and do not disrupt this for me. Boaters on large streams are usually respectful and the fish are not unduly disturbed. On this small quality trout stream this is not true.

The boaters can walk in just like me and see the Upper Chattooga. Additionally, I am disturbed as to bank, vegetation and soil erosion damage I attribute to boat access on small streams.

I support the original decision of the USFS on continuing the boating ban on the Upper Chattooga.

Dear Mr. Cleeves,

As a walker and swimmer, I am writing to protest against opening the Chattooga River to boating between the Highway 28 bridge on the South Carolina/Georgia border and the bridge at NC SR1107 (Whiteside Cove Road). The river which flows through the Ellicott Rock Wilderness and through private property along those miles is currently open to hikers and fishers on its public portions. I object to extending river usage to boating for the following reasons:

1. There are many miles of river open to boating downstream from the Highway 28 bridge. The objection that the river is crowded by the boats is not relieved by adding more miles to boating usage. Overcrowding will not be solved by extending the miles of river open to boaters. Maintaining the wild and scenic nature of the upper Chattooga can only be maintained by keeping people out.

2. I am a tax payer who objects to paying the Forest Service to provide all the services required to maintain the river in an area which has been designated wild and scenic. Let it remain wild and scenic. If people want the United States to continue to have wilderness areas, then they have to understand that the only way to have these areas which everyone enjoys looking at and driving by and through is by having some areas remain virtually untouched.

3. Currently anyone may walk and fish on the river. Boaters are welcome, but not their boats. Allowing the public to hike and fish along the river is enough of an intrusion on the wild and scenic nature of the Chattooga and of a maintenance and service expense for the US Forest Service.

If you want to let boaters into the upper Chattooga, please do but don't call it a wild and scenic river. It will cease to be so. Call it the Chattooga River Recreation Park.

Sincerely,
Amy Chase

Mr. Cleeves,

I have reviewed your web site and the LAC Procedures. I understand that 2/2006 may be the period that the trial runs are reviewed. I would like to point out with existing conditions data can be collected on the pools and rapids below Highway 28 just above the Access Point at Long Bottom.

I do not want to seem basis but, I have encountered boaters on this section. I fly fish the good runs between November 15 and May 15 (Delay Harvest Season trout move down river to the good holding and feeding areas) and on occasions have experienced some traffic that is most unpleasant and destroys the fishing experience. I do not expect to have the same wilderness experience as currently exist above the Highway 28 Bridge but it would be nice to have the shallow runs free from rude and disputative boat traffic during the period that you are fishing.

I would hope that you would consider data collection on these Long Bottom areas just below the Highway 28 Bridge and during the Delayed Harvest Season before making a ruling on allowing trial runs on the sections above Highway 28 Bridge. Same data collection could be conducted during the summer months June to October for boater and swimmers interaction.

I know that the stock trout recover time is must less than the native trout and the social impact between the fisherman and the boater will be some what different than the impact would be in a wilderness location more remote and unexpected, still data collection can be made which would require no administrative changes.

I also fly fish other rivers with varying boat traffic and would like to offer my services in determining boater / fisher interaction by proxy analysis or other means short of allowing trail runs on the section above Highway 28 Bridge.

Thank you for your consideration, best regards, Mike Harvell member of Mountain Bridge Trout Unlimited since 1974 ; e-mail rollcaster@hotmail.com

Mr. Cleeves,

I hope you will consider and read my comments as posted on the website today. I would appreciate a discussion with you in person or at one of the town meetings if possible. As a kayaker and a fisherman, I understand the different perspectives and opinions coming to head in these discussions. I would enjoy

walking the river with you if you can be in Cashiers at any time this winter or spring in order to give you some insights into the river and its rich and endangered history from Grimshawes down to Corkscrew. I am deeply troubled by the proposed use of this section by boaters and feel that if people simply understand the rivers nature in this headwaters section, that much of the opinion in favor of limited use will be relinquished in favor of conservation measures.

What also worries me is some peoples drive to "win" or take something that they feel is being denied to them by others. I must say it is less people that are denying boating passage as it is the river trying to say: "no thanks, catch me further down river". Walk it with me and the sentiments are obvious, there are a pleathora of places within 60 miles that are able to handle a kayak and long sections of Chattooga that are accessible to boaters (complete with and including proper facilities, safety measures, conservation designs) - why must we endanger or even risk endangering this rare and fragile section. I would appreciate a brief reply after you have read my comments onthe web-site just to know understand my offerings on this issue. - when time allows - a really Big thanks for all your efforts!

- Blake Smith in Asheville

Upper Chattooga River - Recreation Use Form

Name (optional) _____

1. What is the most important activity on the trip? (be specific - Ex: Backcountry Fishing, Backpacking, Camping, etc) Wildlife/flora viewing
 2. What other activities would you do on the trip? (Ex: Hiking, Wildlife Viewing, Hunting, Wild Flowering, Birding, etc) Hiking
 3. Where would you go? List the segment(s) you would use and describe your travel route (if any). Section 00
 4. When (what time of year) could you take this trip? (Please specify months, season, or "all year"). [This measures entire season.] Spring and summer
 5. When is the best time of year to take this type of trip? How often do you take (or would you take) this trip per year? [This measures the "prime season".] Twice
 6. How many people (include yourself) would be in your group on this trip? 2-5
 7. How long would your trip be? (Days or hours) One full day
 8. Describe the most important attributes of the trip - the conditions or characteristics of the trip that make it high quality. Virtually unspoiled habitat with minimal human interference.
 9. Describe the specific concerns you have about how other recreation users in the area may affect your trips. Human traffic will increase, and with it littering, noise, damage to plants, threat to wildlife etc.
- Message, via Mr. John Cleeves, Team Leader, core team examining Visitor Use Capacity Analyses for the Chattooga Creek Headwaters.

Given my age, I am not wholly conversant with all aspects of politically-correct speech. Try to overlook that. But I am trying to speak as clearly and concisely – occasionally bluntly – as I am able, in the interests of thorough communication. I am astonished, throughout discussions on this subject, by how oblivious many people are to the oppositions: youth and impetuosity, versus the wisdom of age. Which includes the mistake of treating them as equals, in areas of understanding, knowledge, and wisdom. The Cherokees were the previous "users" of the Chattooga Headwaters. Believe me, they listened to, and respected, the wisdom of their elders. Is what we received (took) from the Cherokee people going to be what we pass on to future generations? Who have been the better custodians? Why? So here's my piece:

For "use capacity analysis", Chattooga Headwaters

Name of user: RC Rust

Primary activity ("use") related to upper Chattooga: Living There. Have spent much of my life there, 1946 – 2005, now full-time.

Secondary Activity: Monitoring the Upper Chattooga. Through observation, on foot, both in the river and along the river corridor. Trails not required. An all-year, all season activity.

Tertiary Activities: Swimming, wading, introducing young members of family & friends to the beauty of an undisturbed Chattooga Creek headwater.

Desired Conditions:

- 1) The creek remain in its natural condition. When hurricanes blow trees into the river, they remain in place. If natural debris collects there, the river may change its course; sometimes permanently, sometimes temporarily.
- 2) Solitude. Without consulting me or anyone I know or have even heard of, the upper Chattooga was declared by our esteemed Congress a "Wild & Scenic River". That term itself includes the concept of solitude. Where there is a high density of people, there is little likelihood the designation "wild and scenic" will be applied. It is absence of people, and their doings and leavings, that define "wild and scenic".

So "Wild & Scenic" means people must be kept out. Period. "Wild & Scenic" cannot simultaneously be recreation playground, thrill-ride amusement park, extreme-sport-high-risk-playground. People must be excluded, unless, UNLESS, of course, they are willing and able to visit the area in a low-impact manner – primarily by remaining inconspicuous; as nearly invisible as possible.

Hiking and casual walking seems to fill that bill, until the density of usage, or carelessness of usage, is such that signs of occupancy remain after the passing through of the hiker. Fishers are even better – for the fishers tend to stay in one place, nearly motionless, for longer periods than do the hikers. –and fishers have an even greater investment in the preservation of the wild environment, for the slightest degradation = no fish. Nor can the fisher make a great racket and still find fish.

All the conditions that start with the word "no" are impossible to list, for there seem to be no limits as to what people can think of, to DO to the wilderness, to BRING INTO the wilderness with them, to POLLUTE it with, or as DISRUPTIVE PLAYTHINGS of an untold variety of descriptions.

A "Wild & Scenic" area cannot be that, and also be a free-for-all playground and recreation area. It can remain wild and scenic only to the extent that the people who enter it bring nothing much more than their clothing and whatever is necessary to sustain them for the hopefully-short time they are there, and use their own legs to get in and out.

–So save the vast array of floating toys for the broad rivers far downstream. They don't belong in headwater streams, anywhere. As Butch Clay so eloquently pointed out at the meeting December 1st, (while the American Whitewater folks were brilliantly attempting to distract our group from producing the written record the Forest Service was hoping to get from our table), the best limiting filter to keep people from ruining the Wilderness areas, and the Wilderness experience, is the limitation on our movements provided by the limitations of our legs.

Hikers and fishers walk; floaters are currently pleased to go as high-tech as possible, enabling them to cast off the limitations of their legs as far as possible. When gear is brought in to play with, long-term there are no foreseeable limits on the consequences. Walkers, on the other hand, are self-limiting.

Indicators...

... are everything that people do, pollute with, or bring into the wilderness with them that alters the pristine natural status of the Wild & Scenic designation.

That includes all unnecessary and disruptive play-pretties, such as kayaks, tubes, mattresses, inflatable you-name-its, and even excessive noise.

Any toys that permit "users" to disrupt long stretches of river, in a short period of time should be banned, permanently and irrevocably.

A single floater can, in one afternoon, disrupt innumerable groups of

swimmers and fishers. So imagine what ever-increasing numbers of floaters WILL do. Think non-stop parade; look downstream for examples. Any notion of "trials" is absurd – the evidence of the impact of floaters is everywhere to be seen. Trials will tell us NOTHING about the ever-increasing density of floater-usage on into the future, or the consequences thereof, or the impact of floaters as PRECEDENT for further intrusive incursions by users with other, unforeseeable types of toys.

Any idea of a creek remaining "Wild & Scenic" is impossible, if there is a procession of people on various floating devices, tubes, kayaks, whatever, leaving behind them a trail of cast-off debris, human "waste" (more specifically: shit), disgruntled fishers, interrupted children-trying-to-play-and-swim.

Today, "extreme kayakers"; tomorrow, heaven knows what.

—and the solution to all this mess is so simple: Human anatomy does not change over time, generation to generation, and is self-limiting. So keep all human access to Wild and Scenic areas: FOOT TRAFFIC ONLY.

Indicators are impossible to list exhaustively, for there is no end to what people think up to do to the wilderness, or leave behind there. I can't list them, for there is no way to anticipate all of them. It can even include, inadvertently, dangerous chemicals and products.

What to list? clean water, clean air, solitude and freedom from human racket, rocks free of kayak marks-of-many-colors... presence of fallen trees and natural debris, left as Nature has scattered it, making splendid fish and other critter habitat... banks left untrimmed and untrampled by excessive walking, portaging, whatever...

Guess this has gone on long enough. This invasion is a FIRST in my nearly sixty years of observing Chattooga headwaters. I can assure you, it IS daunting. Has anybody out there spent more years on the stream's headwaters? Let's hear from you! We, and the Forest Service rangers, and the Higher Echelons of the Forest Service have heard enough from the more active of our society's thrill-seeking spoiled brats and their arrogant lawyers. Let's hear from YOU!

Appendix

Definition: "spoiled brat": a child who is willful, believes everything he wants should be his, NOW! —and who shows no concern for the wishes of others, particularly his elders, or "grown-ups". He does not hear authority, or rules set by his elders. Generally speaking, the "spoiled brat" has become what he is by having been given too much, and screaming for things brings what he wants, rather than earning them. Prone to taking high risks, having become accustomed to being rescued by his elders in any time of crisis. Prone to not accepting the results of his actions, and usually incapable of even seeing those

results. Loves his toys, and with every passing year, wants more territory in which to play with them. Seldom conscious of the monetary costs of his actions, for everything is always paid for by others. Bullying tactics always a favorite, especially if unopposed.

Visitor Use Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

An essay by Doug Adams, a Chattooga backcountry angler since 1955

PO Box 65, Rabun Gap, GA 30568, E-mail: edadams1@alltel.net

December 6, 2005

"Fishermen and women, hunters, hikers and backpackers complaining that there [sic] solitude will be lost. - - Little selfish if you ask me!" - - from a post on the Sumter NF Bulletin Board on December 3, 2005.

Why shouldn't the boaters be granted access to the section of the Chattooga River upstream of the Highway 28 Bridge?

Let us visualize it is a Saturday in April and the river is running full, up 4 inches from a brief rain shower in Cashiers last evening. The weather is warm, and some schools and colleges are on spring break. In the 12 miles of backcountry between Burrell's Ford and Highway 28, a mama black bear has brought her two cubs to feed in the riparian area and to cross the river at Salt Trough. A bobcat stalks a rabbit on a gravel bar in the Boulevard. An osprey patrols the Rocky Gorge for trout to feed her nestlings in a tall dead hemlock next to the river. A great blue heron patiently stalks a sub-adult trout in Hog Wallow.

A Boy Scout troop from Clayton is backpack camping, fishing, wading and swimming at the Sims Fields. A family with two teenage daughters from Toledo, Ohio, is camped at their favorite site near the Sawmill Pool. An elderly couple from Rabun Gap has hiked to the Nugget to view, identify, and photograph wild-flowers. Six college students from Wisconsin are camped at the Nicholson Fields on a 3-day hiking, camping, and fishing trip. A church youth group from Aiken is picnicking near Ira Branch. There are a couple of dozen day-hikers with picnic lunches in daypacks quietly moving through the backcountry on the trails.

A trio of dedicated birders from Syracuse, New York, has hiked down to The Steps in hopes of spotting a Swainson's warbler. A university professor and researcher along with two grad students from Knoxville concerned with biodiversity have hiked off-trail to the Square Turn area searching for a reported colony of the federally endangered small whorled begonia. In their trek to the river they discover a previously unknown colony of the rare Oconee bells. At streamside they sit quietly for 45 minutes watching a pair of minks searching the shallow waters for crawfish. A hiking club from Seneca is on a through-hike, picking up litter along the trail. Two wildlife photographers from Asheville are at Big Bend Falls, where they have fortunately encountered a litter of otter pups with their mother teaching them how to fish the plunge pool.

About 70 backcountry anglers (averaging about 6 per mile) have entered the 12 miles of river by hiking in from the 6 access routes. Most live within an hour of the river, although a significant numbers came from Atlanta, Greenville, Asheville, Columbia, and Athens. Some have traveled from as far away as St Petersburg, Little Rock, St Louis, Detroit, Cincinnati, and Pittsburgh. For a few it is their first visit to this beautiful and spectacular stream. Two fathers brought their excited teenage kids on long-anticipated fishing outings. A grandfather and his 40-year-old son are introducing his 12-year-old grandson to the joys of trout and places where trout are found. A few anglers fish in pairs, but most fish alone. Today a college kid is learning the secrets of the river from a 70-year-old mentor who has fished here for over 50 years.

By hiking along the trail system, all of these visitors and small groups have spaced themselves along the river to achieve their personal envelopes of solitude. This separation also provides the anglers the opportunity to fish for trout that have not recently been disturbed by other visitors. The caddis flies are hatching, and some of the larger trout are beginning to feed on emergers.

A boater from Columbia and another from Marietta rendezvous at the Highway 28 river access site and drop off a vehicle. There is only one other vehicle there. They travel to Burrell's Ford, where about 45 vehicles are already parked. They park along the road on the Georgia side and put their boats in under the bridge about 10 am. As they leave the congestion of the bridge, one boater's paddle tangles and breaks the spinning line of a "put and take" angler. Insults are hurled back and forth, then a fist-size rock splashes near one of the boats. As the boaters speed down-river they pass 7 young children from two families wading, swimming, and playing with inner tubes in the Ford Pool. One mother yells, "Hey, don't get so damn close!"

The boaters hear loud country music coming from a CD player and someone chopping firewood in the campground. Several old men and women are sitting in folding camp chairs fishing in the Black Hole. One old man yells, "Git out of here, you'uns scaring the fish!" One boater tells the other, "This place is just like a circus; these people have no respect for the river." The other replies, "These people would leave if the Forest Service stopped stocking those farm-raised trout."

Finally, the boaters leave civilization behind and enter the solitude of the Upper Chattooga backcountry. They are jacked from being on a seldom-running creek. At 4 pm they take out at Highway 28. They load up and drive back to Burrell's Ford, still pumped up from their trip through the spectacular backcountry and with memories of the challenges they met and overcame at Big Bend Falls, the Sims Shoals, the Big'un Hole, and the Rocky Gorge. As they begin their long drive back to their respective homes, they reflect on their 13 years of struggles with the Forest Service concerning management issues on the Chattooga River. They enjoyed their trip and marvel at the solitude and beauty of the section they floated today. They are proud of the roles they played in opening up this area for year-round private boating.

They are completely oblivious to what they left behind in their wakes. For 12 miles they shattered the solitude of almost every person and creature they encountered, even though each encounter lasted only a few seconds. At the Big Step, the Swainson's warbler spooked as the boaters hollered when they ran the chute. At Big Bend Falls, as the boaters found a "play spot," the otter family left and the wildlife photographers didn't get their photos. As the boats approached Salt Trough, the startled mama bear hustled her cubs back up the same slope from which they had just come. Most of the Boy Scouts thought it was cool watching the boaters run the Sims Shoals 3 or 4 times, but the boys trying to catch trout for a merit badge requirement were disappointed. When the boaters came out of the Rocky Gorge, their loud excited talk scared off the bobcat. As they came around the Square Turn, the minks scurried into their holes under root wads. At the head of the Long Pool, a mile up the "catch and release" Delayed Harvest section, an 83-year-old angler from Lakemont had spotted a rising brown trout and was stalking what would have been the biggest trout of his lifetime, when the boaters torpedoed right through the "sweet-spot". Today, just two boaters disturbed about 60 anglers as they passed through every "sweet-spot" for 12 miles, putting down the trout anywhere from several minutes to a few hours. Some anglers had to move out of the way and reel in; others were startled by the sudden appearance of the boats. Most backcountry visitors experienced a negative reaction to their brief encounter with the 2 boaters, encounters known to Forest Service planners as "user conflicts."

Meanwhile, two young men have bought a 16-foot aluminum canoe and 2 paddles at a yard sale that morning in Greenville. At 2 pm their girl-friends drop them and their canoe off at Burrell's Ford with a Styrofoam cooler full of longneck beers. They are wearing nothing but cut-offs and flip-flops. They tell the girls to be at the 28 Bridge at about 7 o'clock. Most of the backcountry visitors they encounter try to tell them that serious whitewater was ahead and they couldn't possibly float through. They laugh, yell insults, and drink their beer. They break the empty bottles on the rocks, and drag their noisy canoe over the ledges, leaving gouged-off aluminum residue. As they float by the two teenagers from Toledo sunning on rocks at the Sawmill Pool, one man whistles. The other hollers, "Hey babes, come on - - - let us give you a ride." They both laugh and head downstream for the Lower Steps. For the family, the encounter ruins an otherwise fine day. At 10:30 pm the girl-friends called Oconee County Rescue from a private residence in Mountain Rest. The Mountain Rest Unit of the rescue squad has been out all morning searching for 3 high school boys that put in Friday morning at the Highway 28 river access site. One of the boys' father was waiting to pick them up at Earl's Ford. Their Wal*Mart raft tore on a snag and the rescue squad found them, cold and wet, about 10 am Saturday huddled under a white pine near Big Shoals.

The rescuers know right where to look for the 2 guys with the canoe. They get this call about twice per month now, from April through September. About 7 am Sunday morning, the search and

rescue team and the swiftwater body recovery team hike to Big Bend Falls prepared for either rescue or recovery, whichever may be required. These young men are fortunate; one has a sprained ankle and the other a broken arm. They are hypothermic, lying under a rock shelf on the Georgia side, when the rescuers reach them. The rescuers have to cut another wide path through the rhododendron and mountain laurel, enabling them to extract the men strapped in rescue baskets. The canoe is wrapped around the center rock in the upper pool; the paddles, foam cooler, and flip-flops are downstream somewhere. Next fall, the Forest Service will schedule the fire-fighting helicopter to meet with ground crews to extract all of the watercraft lodged in the Upper Chattooga River from this one season.

On that one day, about 100 backcountry visitors and volunteer rescuers experienced some level of user conflict due to encounters with just 3 boats. Numerous wild creatures were startled, their normal routine disrupted. Streamside flora was destroyed. Two men were life-flighted to the Greenville General Hospital and will not return to their jobs for several weeks. The heart of the backcountry was littered with another broken canoe and its contents. Taxpayers were burdened with another rescue, recovery, and clean-up.

The Forest Service planners had the proper solution for angler-boater conflict resolution in 1976, and “zoning,” by maintaining the boating ban, is still the proper solution today. It has achieved solitude and harmony for visitors on the Upper Chattooga for almost 30 years. This unique solitude experience is shared without conflict among traditional backcountry visitors such as anglers, hikers, backpackers, bird watchers, swimmers, waterfall viewers, and nature lovers. For the anglers, there is nowhere else they can go in the East that has the size and volume to permit quality trout fishing in a spectacular backcountry setting that is boating-free. The backcountry visitors want to preserve this unique resource of solitude and protect the natural resources of the only section of the Chattooga that has not been damaged by conflict and management for too many user groups. “Zoning” the space to ensure physical separation of visitors with differing and conflicting ways of experiencing the river and the environment is proper management; and it is also what is best for the future of the Upper Chattooga River.

“When users with (a) high personal attachment to an activity, (b) high personal attachment to the resource, (c) specific and focused ways of experiencing the environment, and/or (d) low tolerance for other users encounter users with different beliefs and behaviors, there is ample potential for conflict.”

“Streams and whitewater—Water attracts a wide variety of visitors, including swimmers, viewers of fish, anglers, and users of muscle- and motor-powered watercraft. The possibilities of conflict are obvious. For the most part, all the uses just listed are incompatible with one another.”

“Land managers, therefore, are being forced to examine more closely the question of access and who gets what, when, and where. Early detection of user conflicts and effective conflict resolution depend on understanding where and how conflicts arise. Resolving a conflict in its initial stages before users ally themselves with larger, better-organized interest groups helps to avoid costly political and legal actions.”

“Conflict resolution may involve both zoning and education. When the source of conflict is goal interference, it is more appropriate to consider zoning by time, space, or activity. Zoning can ensure that different types of users are physically separated.”

(Quote excerpts from The Southern Forest Resource Assessment; Southern Research Station, USDA Forest Service, dated Oct. 2002; report 4.5 titled Potential Conflicts Between Different Forms of Recreation). For the complete report, click on: <http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/sustain/draft/socio6/socio6-09.htmir>

Dear Mr. Cleeves-

After reviewing the subject documents on the website, I have the following comments that I wish included in the public record:

Handout A:

My and my family's interest is day hiking and relaxation on the Upper Chattooga River from the Grimshawes Bridge to the SC State line. The most important factors that we seek are solitude and an undisturbed experience where we can enjoy unspoiled wilderness, safety while the children picnic and play in the creek, and freedom from the hectic pace of everyday life. We do not believe that the record adequately reflects the need for the quiet and solitude we seek along with the assurance that children playing in the river will be safe from the danger of watercraft or "thrill seekers" out for their momentary adrenalin rush. Just as we would not attend a Six Flags amusement park to escape the sounds of screaming or people experiencing extremes, we do not believe that an unspoiled and peaceful river should become an area for cheap thrills and extreme boating. Please ensure that this concern is included in the record.

Handout B:

We do not find that the Indicators in Handout B adequate reflect the measurement or determination of our desire for peace and solitude along with children's safety in the river. Additional indicators should include number of hiking or picnic disturbances, number of occurrences where swimmers and watercraft occupy the same space, measurement of the average time of advance warning and distance for picnicians /

Karl N. Koon
Asheville Oil Company
phone (828) 274-7978
fax (828) 274-6673

Hello John,

Having attended the three meetings concerning the boating ban and having heard all the comments, ideas, suggestions it has become even more clear to me how important it is to maintain the ban. The idea of zoning to protect resources, including the resource of solitude, is a logical one and the USFS has made the right decision in the forest plan.

It is unfortunate that the Forest Service has to spend the time, money and effort when the proper decision has already been reached. However, the wisdom and soundness of the decision is just made more and more evident. I urge you to maintain the protection of the Upper Chattooga through the banning of any type of boating.

Charlie Breithaupt

Kathy & Charlie Breithaupt
194 Kitchens Lane
Clayton, GA 30525
knc615@direcway.com

Dear Mr. Cleaves,

I am writing as the Chairman of the Georgia Council of Trout Unlimited. I speak for over three thousand members of Trout Unlimited in our state. A

number of us have attended the three meetings, read and heard the comments at the meetings, as well as those posted on your site. We have concluded that the position we have taken...that the boating ban above Highway 28 on the Chattooge River must be maintained...is the correct one for all, especially the river.

Also, I have been in contact with our national office and have been told they agree with our position and we have their total support. I urge the USFS to stand by the decision to zone the Upper Chattooga as outlined in the Forest Plan.

Thank you for what you are doing for our forest.

Charlie Breithaupt
Chairman, Georgia Council of Trout Unlimited

Kathy & Charlie Breithaupt
194 Kitchins Lane
Clayton, GA 30525
knc615@direcway.com

Posted on Tuesday, December 6, 2005 at 21:55 Hours (Server time).

From: Brian Sutphin
Email: shsutphin@yahoo.com

Telephone Number: 336-416-0487

Street Address:
1056 Slate Road
King, NC 27021

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

Thanks for giving us a forum to express our opinions. The ban that was issued thirty years ago, from what I have read in the Wild and Scenic river Act, is illegal due to the fact that one group of users are being discriminated against for the way that they want to enjoy the river and it's surroundings. I hope that this issue can be resolved and we can All enjoy this pristine section of river.

Posted on Tuesday, December 6, 2005 at 11:13 Hours (Server time).

From: Mike Harvell
Email: Rollcaster@hotmail.com

Telephone Number: 787 529 8556

Street Address:
(enter your mailing address)

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

State and Local Government Agencies NC, GA & SC will be responsible for enforcement of imposed water level and float period limits if amendments are made to the 1985 Forest Plan. Search and rescue of overdue boaters will also be their responsibility with the Forest Service providing support. Visitor Use Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River Stakeholder Groups must hear their official positions and proposed procedures if the 1985 Forest Plan is changed. These procedures and plans must be considered in the Visitor Use Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River Limits of Acceptable Change model (LAC).

Mr. John Cleeves
US Forest Service

December 6, 2005

Dear Mr. John Cleeves:

I am writing to object to the motion that is before the Forestry service to open section 00 of the upper Chatugue river. I have had the opportunity to spend time on that part of the river and have been mesmerized by its still beauty. One can sit at the edge of the bank and be content listening to the sound of water, birds, and other wildlife. My husband enjoys fly fishing and I enjoy following along the bank till we get to a place he is hopeful he'll get a bite. I have also enjoyed swimming in the "dead pool" and sitting on the rock face with friends for a quiet afternoon. Our friends' children love swimming in a pool that has no bottom and a rock side rather than a concrete one. We now have an 11 month old son and I so look forward to taking him up to that area and sharing with him the quiet beauty of the North Carolina mountains. I understand why boaters want to open up that part of the river. It's in their nature to want to paddle any water they can. Perhaps there are sections of that river you can paddle but many of the areas I have seen you would have to portage which would seriously lay open the river to much thoughtless destruction. I fear that paddlers would mistakenly try to paddle some sections they shouldn't, destroying natural eddies in their paths. While there are fishermen who wade through sections of this river, it is in the nature of their sport to approach the river gently and quietly. That is not so with boaters. I do believe if the Forestry service were to open the river to paddlers it would destroy much of what makes it special. Please save this part of the river for the fauna, wildlife, children, fishermen and one woman who enjoys quiet meditation.

Sincerely,

Joan Shealy Best

Mr. John Cleeves
US Forest Service

December 6, 2005

Dear Mr. Cleeves,

I have recently become aware of a movement to allow recreational boating on Section 00 of the Upper Chattooga. I think that this is one of the last great pristine forest areas in WNC and it would be a tragedy to open it up to the kind of traffic that would surely be generated by such a decision.

I have been visiting Section 00 since I was a kid. I come to fly fish, hike, and picnic but I always end up watching wildlife and practicing amateur botany. I am amazed by the diversity of ferns, mosses, galax, wild orchids, rhododendrons, and other plants and trees that flourish in this area like I have never seen anywhere else. In my time spent in the river, I have seen otters, deer, bobcats, bear, as well as healthy native trout.

I cherish every moment that I am able to spend in the solitude of this area. One of my first memories of fly fishing was with my father just below Fowler's Creek. I have snuck up on the "log jam" countless times only to spook unsuspecting trout before I could even have a cast at them. I recently picnicked at the "dead pool" falls with my wife and newborn son. I can only hope that I may be able to someday teach him to appreciate the serenity of this area as my father taught me.

I worry that if boats start trying to navigate this stretch of river then it could cause great damage to the things that make it so special. The water level is often very low. Boaters would scar the rocks and mosses and have to perform many portages which could disturb other native plants and wildlife. For me personally, I can't think of anything worse than spending quiet hours casting to a feeding fish only to be interrupted by a passing kayak, canoe or tube.

In summary, Section 00 is a natural treasure and also a fragile ecosystem. Please help keep it this way for other generations to enjoy.

Sincerely,

Nathan Best
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