

**Chattooga River Public Comments**  
**May 21 - July 15, 2006**

**Posted on Friday, May 26, 2006 at 12:35 Hours (Server time).**

From: John D. Lovell  
Email: doug\_lovell@hotmail.com

Telephone Number: (706)754-9779

Street Address:  
255 Unity Hills Road  
Clarkesville, GA 30523

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

I have been a fly-fisherman for over 20 years. The head waters of the Chattooga River should be left boat and raft-free for the trout fishermen. We have suffered enough, been pushed aside, and have very little unspoiled sections of natural rivers to fly-fish. Some boaters and rafters are rude and think they have the right-of-way over fishermen. It's time to say "No more!" Leave well-enough alone. The boaters and rafters have plenty of miles of rivers to raft and boat in. I would love to see some of the natural head-waters preserved for our children and grandchildren to enjoy.

**June 2, 2006**

Dear Mr. Cleeves:

I am writing to strongly oppose any zoning change that would allow boating above Hwy 28. Boaters have plenty of access to the river below the bridge and boating in the upper section would seriously degrade the experience for all other users. The Forest Service would have a difficult time enforcing any rules in this section due to the significant increase in usage and the expanded duties.

I urge you to defend the current policy of the Forest Service vigorously and keep the upper section free from boating and its harmful effects.

Thank you for your time.

Reid Pollard

629-B Mountain Rd.

Asheboro NC 27205

336-625-1000

**June 2, 2006**

Dear Mr. Cleeves:

As a long-time user and supporter of the Chattooga River, I am totally opposed to the permitting of boating on the upper reaches of this outstanding river.

My introduction to flyfishing began in 1963 on the Chattooga River. It wasn't an officially designated Wild and Scenic River, but it was wild..and unbelievably scenic. My skills at flyfishing grew, as did my appreciation for this river, and what it provided in the way of a nearly unblemished wilderness area. As a trained professional forester, employed by the South Carolina Forestry Commission, I may have been in a privileged position to realize what a tremendous value this area represented for the citizens of South Carolina and Georgia, and for visiting non-residents. Even back in those days of the early 1960's, I remember reflecting on how wonderful it would be if my children could experience the same solitude this river and adjacent land provided. And so it came to pass that a son born in 1959, and a daughter born in 1960, were able to do just that. They have fished, hiked, bird watched, and have been able to experience "the Chattooga", just as I did over forty years ago. I am thoroughly convinced that if boating in the upper portion of the Chattooga had been approved in 1970, the solitude of the river would have been severely impacted. The studies of the river at that time were adequate, and clearly showed that a detrimental impact would be experienced. The correct decision was made then, and is even more applicable now. Just look at the areas of the lower Chattooga where boating is allowed, and one can see that the impact on the river is not something acceptable to folks seeking the solitude of a Wild and Scenic River.

My children are now allowing their children, my grandchildren, to experience the wonders of a quiet walk from Burrell's Ford to Ellicott's Rock. Hiking and fishing the Chattooga still gives this 74 year old man a tingle. Why spoil this solitude with the presence of rafts, canoes, and kayaks, just because the water is there? I still fly fish the Chattooga, as well as premier trout streams all over the United States, and seriously...none are any more beautiful than our Chattooga. As my forestry career progressed, and I became State Forester, Director of the SC Forestry Commission, and retired in 1993, I never stopped being concerned about the future of the Chattooga River and its beautiful wooded corridor. Threats of nature in the form of forest fire, insect and disease attack are ever present, and are often beyond our control. The proposed impact of boating in the upper reaches of the Chattooga River is something we can control, and I urge you and other representatives in decision making positions to stand fast in keeping this portion of the Chattooga boat free.

Very truly yours,

Robert J. Gould  
State Forester, Retired

**Posted on Thursday, June 8, 2006 at 9:42 Hours (Server time).**

From: R. Will Newman  
Email: wnewman@plmtrailer.com

Telephone Number: 770-985-9275

Street Address:  
1588 Rivermist Drive Lilburn, GA 30047

Message Subject: Upper Chattooga boating issue

Message Contents:

I would like to make know my thoughts on allowing boaters on the upper Chattooga. I frequently hike and fish on this section of the river, and find it a wonderful and relaxing place that you can enjoy nature at it's finest without much interference from humans. I also fish and hike in many other streams and trails in GA and the Carolinas, and always gravitate back to this section of the Chattooga for that reason. Bicycles are not allowed on many hiking trails, and neither are horses. I do not find it unreasonable for this one section of the Chattooga to be closed to boaters at all. It is disturbing to see the whitewater advocates act in a bullying fashion. There are many miles of River for them to boat on, and I do not know of another place one can go and fish, camp, hike and enjoy a wilderness experience without boaters in bright neon colored craft, yelling and cutting over your line, and I find them to be generally disruptive in a serene setting. I am not against them having what they already have, and I fish often in places where boaters use the water as well.

It does however shut down the fishing for a while after they come through, and they frequently do not have much regard for fishermen. I have had them run under my line, and then get mad at me for being in their way. This is not every one, but it does happen as often as not.

Please keep this wonderful area as it is. You have precedent for keeping these boats out of this section just as you do for keeping mountain bikes and horses off of many trails in other areas.

**June 15, 2006**

Mr. Cleaves: This is a no brainer.. Why do the AWA. think that they can enter the Upper

Chattooga by some means of transport other than by foot.? I thought the original thinking of foot traffic, was the only method that satisfied the classification of Wild & Scenic in the original discription 30 years ago. I suspect that the boaters have some hidden agenda here somewhere. Keep it the way it is... If they want thrills ...Go to Six Flags. Charlie Trettel; ( A reasonable Naturalist

**June 18, 2006**

John Cleeves; Project Coordinator,  
USDA Forest Service  
4931 Broad River Road, Columbia, SC 29212.  
E-mail [jcleeves@fs.fed.us](mailto:jcleeves@fs.fed.us)

Dear Mr. Cleeves;

I am writing you to comment on the issue of the Upper Chattooga as to conflicts between white water boating and fishing / camping.

I have been a resident of Georgia for 40 years. I fished the Chattooga in the early 1970's and have had several past encounters with white water boaters on this river.

Our group would camp out and fish for two weekend days on the upper Chattooga. On almost every trip I made during the pre boating ban I was impacted by boats and rafts when they went through the pools I was fishing. Most boaters were polite some were not.

The polite ones were equally disruptive to fishing as the fish would not settle down for a while and then here came another group of boats. They travel in clans. What good would it do for me to move up or down stream? Yelling instructions and staging the boats at the base of falls and steep runs was common.

This boat staging and socializing often was located exactly where the fish were concentrated. I still remember the several un-polite rafters / boaters yelling for me to get out of the “#@#\$% way while I was fishing the deeper 4 ft. run in the center of the Chattooga.

Mr. Cleeves, boaters for the most part are polite and I am friends with many. However, once they launch they are like the preverbal snowball headed down hill. They have no choice but to go downstream and that is the problem. The boaters have almost every other cold water river in Georgia and the USA to do their thing. I do not have a cold water river sanctuary other than the upper Chattooga. And sadly, I do not even have the remainder of the Chattooga.

Something is going on here that is larger than a few miles of a Georgia trout stream. I don't understand why the boaters are not satisfied with 99%. Why do I have to endure their impact to give them the final 1%? Their position is selfish, unreasonable and without cause in my book. Please protect this last sanctuary of sanity from a disruptive boating traffic jam. Keep the boating ban in place on the upper Chattooga.

Ray Gentry  
Sautee, Georgia  
6/18/06

**June 19, 2006**

I would like to express my opposition to allowing boating above the Highway 28 bridge on the Chattooga River. I have had very bad experiences from boaters on other streams and there ought to be at least one stretch of river where us trout fishermen can enjoy our sport without the interference of boaters and in particular rafters and kayakers. I have already written to the USFS about my experience fishing on Moccassin Creek when a kayaker came shooting down a waterfall and on downstream where just minutes before I had been fishing and would have been skewered by that crazy person. Kayakers in particular have no regard for the size or conditions on a stream or other users on streams, they only look for what will give them the greatest thrill.

Although my experience on Moccassin Creek was bad, it doesn't compare with the daily harrassment that trout fishermen have to submit to on one of the best trout streams in the south, the Nantahala River below the power station. Every raft that goes by hollers at fishermen and thinks you are being snotty if you don't acknowledge them even though they may be the 50th boat down the river with people in it that have said or asked the same thing over and over. The kayakers are even worse because they will go up and down runs containing trout over and over to practice whatever it is they are doing and spoil the fishing. Even worse, I have been wading in the Nantahala and rafters out of control come barrelling down and feel that I have no right to be in their way in the river and repeatedly endanger my life. I am sure somebody thinks that fishermen have been taken care of on the Nantahala because of the delayed harvest section on that river above the power station. However, that is just an artificial fishery on a very marginal part of the river, while the best part of the river with the most wild fish and the largest fish are in the waters below the power station down to the Nantahala Outdoor Center which are overrun with rafters and kayakers.

Both the lower Chattooga (below the Highway 28 bridge) and the Nantahala are perfect examples of what will happen to the upper Chattooga (above the Highway 28 bridge) if boaters are allowed. There may be some polite and thoughtful kayakers interested in disturbing the wild environment and others using it as little as possible. However, in my experience most of the rafters and kayakers that I have encountered had little regard for the safety of fishermen or their enjoyment of the river.

The boaters argue that it is their right to use the Upper Chattooga and that the USFS cannot restrict its use. I would like to point out that the USFS has in fact previously restricted use on other streams for the specific usage of certain groups to the detriment of others. The specific example that I would like to bring to your attention affected me personally and other fishermen. Back in the early 1990's all of Smith Creek below Anna Ruby Falls was open to fishing. There was a fine population of wild rainbow and wild brook trout (coming from brook trout streams above the falls) below Anna Ruby falls downstream for a good ways. The USFS closed Smith Creek to fishing from Anna Ruby falls all the way to the picnic area just below the tourist center and parking lot in order to establish an artificial population of demonstration fish (mostly rainbows and browns) artificially fed to grow to sizes that tourists unused to spotting trout in streams would be able to see. This was done under the guise of providing education to the public about trout, but what it really does is provide income to the private vendors at the tourist center and the USFS.

The bottom line is that if you can restrict fishing access to Smith Creek to the detriment of fishermen and for the benefit of tourists, then you can restrict access to the upper Chattooga for the benefit of fishermen, birders, hikers, campers, etc. regardless of the pressure put upon you by

the boaters and their organizations. If you cave in to the boaters then you have lost your ability to make judgements that you think are in the best interests of the public and the wild resources.

Alex Watson  
764 Wildwood Rd  
Atlanta, GA 30324  
(404) 872-1021

**June 19, 2006**

Hello Mr. Cleaves,

I have read articles and followed the issue of allowing boaters on the upper Chattooga for some time now, and I had written a response to you some time back. Please allow me to express my strongest of feelings once again on this issue as it is near and dear to me.

This section of river is the only place that I know of that offers the solitude and remote feeling that you can find no where else in this part of the country. I fish and hike there often and other places as well. While I do not deny boaters water to paddle, there are many examples where specific types of transportation and conveyances are not allowed for various reasons. Bikes and horses are not allowed on many trails and I do not hear about those groups of people filing suit.

It is not possible to find water of this size any where and experience the majesty of the wilderness without screaming neon colored kayaks and loud whoops and yelling passing you by. I fish many waters where boaters are allowed and it is quite common for them to run directly over your line, or under your line, and have had them actually get mad at me for fishing in the same stream as them. I don't expect to fish the Nantahala in peace and you do not see people trying often, but you don't see us filing suit over that. There is nothing wrong with keeping this section as peaceful and serene as it is now. And the upper section is dangerous and remote making rescue efforts difficult and dangerous for numbers of people.

I don't have anything against boaters, but I do think they have enough water available now as it is. I have a number of friends that are kayakers and they are split on this issue, but none of them will deny that there is noise and intrusion on other people associated with their sport.

Please stand firm on this issue, and let me know what I can do to help. Perhaps there are other areas that could benefit from similar restrictions as these in place for the upper Chattooga.

Sincerely,

Will Newman

**June 19, 2006**

I have been reading about the boating ban and the American Whitewater lawsuit. I can tell you that the two are not compatible and that the boaters will dominate the rivers if allowed on them. It is plain that boaters will disrupt fishing but fishing will not disrupt the boaters. One only has to look at the lower section of the Nantahala or the section of the Chattahoochee above Helen GA to see that where rafting is permitted fishermen are not able to fish. It takes about 45 minutes for fish to resume feeding after being disturbed. Many hatches last only an hour or so. A fisherman

may have driven for hours and hiked for miles just to partake of a quality hatch such as occurs in the evening on the Chattooga. One canoe passing through a fisherman's location and all of his efforts are ruined. Not so for the kayaker. They will blissfully pass by not knowing the disruption they have caused another person. Please consider this reality when making a decision regarding the boating ban and leave it like it is. Boaters do not have to notch their paddles like a gunman put notches in their gun handles for every conquest they make. Don't let them kill this river for us just so they can put a notch in their paddle.

Sincerely,

Bruce Rickey

**Home Analyst, Inc.**

**Bruce Rickey**

*Owner*

Bruce@yourhomeanalyst.com

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Marietta, GA 30068

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*Add me to your address book... Want a signature like this?*

**June 20, 2006**

Mr. Cleeves –

As an avid angler, I would be opposed to changing the existing regulations to allow boats on the Upper Chattooga. Boaters certainly have plenty of access on the lower portion. I see this similar to the Nantahala in North Carolina. For 8 miles, the upper section of the Nantahala (between the lake and powerhouse) is a DH fishery. Past the powerhouse, the river is accessible to rafts, kayaks, etc. This distinction in use of various river sections has worked well for many years – as it does now on the Chattooga. I see no need to change.

Respectfully.

Paul Young

28 West Washington

Newnan, GA 30263

[pscy3@mail.newnanutilities.org](mailto:pscy3@mail.newnanutilities.org)

**June 20, 2006**

Jim Kidd  
Lands Program Manager  
Chattahoochee National Forest  
770-297-3062  
Fax - 770-297-2939

John: I would like to make a comment on the Chattooga River and the boater issue. I fish down from Hwy 28 for red eye bass. There are very few trout down that far due to water temperatures being too high for trout. The point I want to make is that it is a continual water slide of boats and commercial rafters in this area. Very difficult to fish and absolutely no privacy or solitude. It does impact the fishing and the experience. The river in this area might as well be a commercial water slide for kayaks and rafts. I am a boater also. And as a boater, I have no problem dividing the river into zones of use. None at all. There is a place on this part of the river for solitude and fishing. The boaters are simply being greedy and they absolutely do, without doubt, impact my experience in a negative way. This is based on 25 years of experience on the river and 35 years experience as a resource manager. A large portion of this time has been associated with the Chattooga.

These comments are made as a private citizen. Thanks for your time. JK

## **June 21, 2006**

Mr. Cleeves,

About 20 years ago, I had an unpleasant experience with boaters on the Chattooga River in the shoals below long bottoms downstream from the Highway 28 bridge. The experience was unpleasant not because of the conduct of the boaters but because of the impact their activity has on trout behavior. I was fishing to rising trout and having good luck when I saw a large trout rise just upstream from my wading position. As I moved into casting position, a flotilla of canoes rounded the bend above me and floated over the location where the big trout had been. Needless to say, the floating canoes put the trout down and my day had been made much less pleasant than it might have been if I had caught (and released) that big trout. I left the river in disgust and have seldom fished that section of the river since.

The Chattooga River above the 28 bridge is too small to accommodate boaters and fishers in a compatible way. On small rivers where boating or floating is allowed, fishing for trout is less than satisfactory. Examples I am personally familiar with are the lower Little River near Townsend, TN; Deep Creek in the Smokies, and the Chattahoochee in Helen, GA. Only on large rivers is boating and fishing (in a serious way) truly compatible.

The Multiple Use philosophy promoted by the Forest Service in the 70s clearly recognized that you cannot have all uses on any given area of a forest. That philosophy is true for rivers as well, especially small rivers like the Upper Chattooga. The best way to avoid conflicts among users is to zone the river and maintain the no-floating section above the 28 bridge, as the river is presently managed and has been for almost 30 years. If floating were allowed above the 28 bridge, the quality of the fishing experience would drastically decline and continue to worsen in the decades ahead as floating pressures increase.

Dave Van Lear

**June 28, 2006**

**John:**

About five years ago I fished the West fork of the Chattooga on a regular basis (at least once a month from March through June). During the cooler months I did not see too many (if any) tubers on the river, but there were plenty of boaters. In almost all cases these boaters took the attitude that they had the right away in the river and you had better get out of their way regardless of where you were and how difficult it was to move in the water. The amount of noise they made and the degree that they disturbed the trout fishing was of no concern to them. In many cases the fish were spooked by the boats and paddling and the fishing would suffer as a result.

In the case of tubers, they were typically younger and had absolutely no respect for your fishing. In fact they seemed to make more noise as they passed by. Rarely would they go by without throwing something in the water. Needless to say, the fishing stopped after they came through making all the noise that is typical of tubing activity. As time passed the number of boaters became more numerous and their effect on the fishing was too much to tolerate. I believe that was their purpose anyway to get rid of the fisherman.

After fishing this section of the river for years, I gave it up and now only fish the north fork above Hwy 28. When the issue regarding boating came up I thought surely the Forest Service would never ruin the fishing on that section of the river by allowing boating in such a pristine part of the Chattooga. Now I hear that the boaters have sued the Forest Service over this matter and that action goes right along with my earlier impression of the boaters; that is they have no regard for our need to have good trout fishing. Boaters have little, if any, understanding of the sport if they think we can co-exist on the river with no detrimental effect to trout fishing. I teach fly fishing tactics and fly casting year around and stress the importance of being quiet and moving in a stealthy manner along a trout stream. The north fork of the Chattooga is too small for both fisherman and boaters to coexist. The boaters have the majority of the river and we have accepted that. However, we pray that we can practice our sport on the river without the negative effects of boating and tubing.

Please leave well enough alone and honor the fishermen who fish this beautiful river!

Regards....

**M. A. (Mack) Martin Jr.**

Manager/CCI- Atlanta FF School

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Mailing address: 6105 Paddock Lane

Cumming, GA 30040

**June 28, 2006**

Mr. Cleeves,

I am a member of Trout Unlimited and am writing to let you know that I have had to stop fishing the Chattahoochee River near Helen, Georgia and Unicoi State park due to the intrusion of the public boat traffic. The fishing is virtually impossible on any day when boats and floats are present as the fish, obviously, are not feeding, and the entire activity of fly fishing is impossible due to the proximity of boaters.

If I could make a plea for more restrictions of other rivers for "foot travel only" areas where hikers, backpackers and fishermen could enjoy the streams and rivers without the noise, trash, and disturbance of boating.

Thank you for listening.

Walt Anderson  
Roswell, Georgia

**June 29, 2006**

As an avid fisherman and resident of Atlanta, Ga., I am against this ban being lifted.. I regularly fish on the Toccoa river, which allows Canoes and kayaks. It is a great hindrance to successfully fish when these boaters go through. The solitude of the experience is ruined. Please do not allow the Chatooga to suffer the same fate.

**Joe DeGonge <"><**

Vice President Financial Consultant

Charles Schwab & Co., Inc./Charles Schwab Bank, N.A..\*

404- 724-2471

[joe.degonge@schwab.com](mailto:joe.degonge@schwab.com)

**Posted on Thursday, June 29, 2006 at 13:40 Hours (Server time).**

From: Ron Grob  
Email: rongrob@mindspring.com

Telephone Number: 404-519-4096

Street Address:  
2525 W. Rock Quarry Rd., Buford, GA. 30519

Message Subject: Visitor Capacity Analysis, Upper Chattooga River

Message Contents:

I too am a fly fisherman that uses the Chattooga ocassionally, and really hate the thought of having a bunch of yak'rs and canoes drifting through my favorite fishing spot... But!! I think we tend to look at these decisions as black and white,, yes or no,,,, restricted or not restricted.. Why cant we compromise and allow the boaters time on the river and restrict the fishing on those days. Each group could have designated days for fishing and designated days for boating. Very much like how some creeks are restricted to fishing on certain days and from dawn to dusk, catch and release, barbless hooks, etc. These are the rules and we follow them,, its just the way things are...

This would be a compromise and will accomodate everyone, ,yes there will be some time when we cant fish the river and there will be some time when the yak'rs can't boat,,but thats life,,, get over it... We need to co-exist,,cause we are all using God's gifts to us--nature--,, fisherman have no more right to the river than anyone else,,except that we pay license fees.. So make the yak'rs and canoes pay a license fee just like we do.. They want the right to use the river,,then charge them and restrict them to certain times.....

The alternative could very well be worse,,,boaters all the time when we are fishing or boaters none of the time, with continued lawsuits,, which quite frankly eats into your budget and reduces the available money and human resources for the more important studies and projects that need to be done.. Compromise when done judiciously, is admirable and good for all parties.

But that's just my opinion and I could be wrong...(If nothing else,,,live life, love everything, ride your motorcycle,,and fish the rest of the time.....! thanks ron...

**July 6, 2006**

Good day.

The upper Chattooga (Sec. 1) does not need a bunch of idiot boaters ruining the sense and feel of remoteness now enjoyed by visitors to the river. It is too narrow, too shallow and restricted for both boats and fishermen. Boaters now have access to almost every river

in the SE to run and play in and now they want the one place where there are restrictions to be removed.

Although I enjoy kayaking and paddling canoes (I make 4-6 boating trips every year) I understand the need to not allow such activities on the Chattooga. It's simply too small and too shallow for the most part. A recently opened outfitter on the Chattahoochee below Buford Dam dumps lots of orange kayaks on the river and it has ruined the upper section for fishermen. Groups of kayaks will turn the once wild places of the Chattooga into more of the same – thumping and bumping their way down the river, ruining the fishing and remoteness. Please do not allow this to mess up a good thing.

Recently I encountered 2 kayakers on the upper Chattooga – below Big Bend falls and above the gorge. When I informed them of the fact that boating was not allowed on that section they gave me the finger and then shouted that 'they' were going to change the rules and bunch of stupid fishermen were not going to stop them. Add to that the fact that both kayakers ran over my fishing line and didn't give a flip about that either. Fairly aggressive in their manner and speech. They did not give a damn about anyone else. I foresee much worse encounters and arguments if more boaters are allowed on the upper section.

Well once they ran through the hole I was working that was it for fishing. I was catching fish up until the encounter with the boaters. After that not one fish. I was very mad and would have thrown a rock at them if my girlfriend had not gotten me to calm down. It's going to be a big fight on the river banks if the boaters are allowed to trash the water and shore. I know how much trash they leave on the lower river. It's only going to get worse.

Sincerely,

Matt Bohler