

**Comments Written by Meeting Participants on Flipcharts
Public Meeting, Visitor Use Capacity Study, Chattooga Wild and Scenic River
Walhalla, SC – October 13, 2005**

#1 HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS?

Have opportunity to express opinion on each step

Email contact

Personal contact (Attend meeting, etc.)

Snailmail

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Group Rep/stakeholder – come to table

Educational process

Mailings continue internet

Newspapers duel-fight it out

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Meeting attendance

Would like to be involved with study design

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In a meaning full way

Want to make comments “for the record” - public

Notified of meeting decisions (kept informed)

Review data for understanding

Site visits

Access to trial runs – they’re an object of concern

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Involved in actual study design – How studies are designed on line- BBS

Which questions are asked in the study

Involved in how the access areas are managed

Want a broad base of users involved through outbound comm.. methods – surveys, lectures, focus groups, polling

Individual wants to participate equal basis w/interest groups.

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Email lists, hard-mail lists.

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D Adams – In all the proposed timeline -steps and any field work.

Don Kinser – Field trials

Tom McInnis – Surveys

Charlie Breithaupt – Asked by Forest Service for help/input.

Terry Rivers – Wants S&R to be involved in all aspects of process.

David Camon – Meeting and field work.

Jimmy Harris – Conduit of information; being informed.

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What options are there for involvement?

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- Phone, email, internet, mail
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- Possibilities for comment via Internet/meeting, etc. and that comment be public.
- Volunteering to assist with public communications
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- Involvement through website.
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Want to be involved so that all recreational activities have equal opportunities.
People want information mailed.
Happy with meeting
Clarify process and status of information/decisions.

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Email, snail mail, web-page updates.

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People need opportunity to have a public hearing to voice opinions.
Need to have public meetings in Highlands/Clayton/Walhalla.
Could rotate locations for meetings.
Have only/meeting at each time.
Participate in activity.

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GFW – wants to be involved in the design of the studies. I want to know if the Tetraek consultant is being paid by the taxpayer or an outside group. How much is consultant be paid?
Keep America Whitewater informed.
America Whitewater wants to paddle to see what the conflict is-if there is one.
Stay informed and be allowed to give input, like to paddle and fish and use the river.
Be involved in the dialogue.
Understand the whole process and give my opinion.
Testing paddling against other uses is important but before this test you need to have measurable assessments of what is going on above Hwy 28.

#2 HOW DO YOU WANT TO KEEP INFORMED/RECEIVE INFO?

Surveys
Focus groups
Online message board
Personal participation in study by actively engaging in desired use
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Paid Employees
Reps-continue at
Go back to group for consensus
Layer influence

Ownership of statistics

Permit all users

FS budget to monitor/enforce

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E-mail

Snail mail (postal service)

Public meetings/hearings

Regular mailing to update and share any gathered information

Public radio/public information forums (media)

Notices in newspapers

PSA's

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I live far away, email works great

Full disclosure, transparent public process

Trial boating involvement

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We want to be informed by: Email, updated website, comments need to be accepted on-line.

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Telephone, email, letters, website

Important that information sticks – and is given

Communicate how decision and what date used.

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Email lists, hard-mail lists.

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Email/Web postings

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Website

Emails

Flyers

How can you improve communication? Newspaper, radio – local.

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Phone

Email/Internet

Mail

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Mail

Email

Channel 4 news

Radio announcements

Post information on website

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Notification of meetings. Official notification in writing from the USFS.

No last minute changes.

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Email

Website

Mail

Put in newspaper, radio TV.

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Websites, emails and hard copy mail (optional hard copy mail)

Notices in local newspapers.

Notices and meetings in NC and other varying locations (Highlands).

Signs directing people to websites. Signs in the affected areas, i.e. main roads, telephone poles, etc.

Rabun County Station & Community Room Fire Station.

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#3 QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/LIKES/DISLIKES ABOUT THE PROCESS OR WHAT YOU'VE HEARD

What is geographic limitation of study?

Were else has a study of this kind occurred in the Eastern U.S. (or is this the first one of its kind)?

What is the economic impact of the ORVs here and in other areas?

More info on 85 ban

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What are the main issues involved?

How can a fair and equitable study take place if anyone of the proposed uses is absent during the study?

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Get rid of hotheads

No commercial above

Can of worms opened

Bad experiences: no use

Fairness fish vs boat

Equitable user study

Enforceable importance

Nudist

Importance of resource protection

Segments possible

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2 year time limit is too long

Need forum for negotiations if consensus is desired

Need opportunity for major stakeholders to meet

Need to know what is on the table, what is decision space

Need to focus on what is right rather than popular

USFS uncertainty in process (competence)

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We like that we're being asked to comment from the beginning

We think processes like these do work

We're concerned about false information being distributed after the meetings (public)

Data Quality Control ie. Jocassee Gorge years ago

We want public monitoring/oversight of data quality

If we have better data to help for next time then we want it incorporated

How do we quantify solitude and experience in this area for data purposes?

We like that we don't have to hear all 100-200 speeches (personal speeches)

Website comment section hard to locate

Process to evaluate all suggestions on an equal basis

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We don't understand it. Poorly explained.

Where are the zones/sections?

How will water flow be measure? High water vs. low water?

How will they calculate the: number of boaters, number of anglers

What consideration is made for future use?

How will water quality be measured?

Will an E.I.S. be done?

By whom?

Will boating be allowed during the 2 year study period?

Need to consider all uses allowed as a baseline. Need to consider no users as a baseline.

How will safety be evaluated?

How will private property be evaluated? Vs. Public property?

Need to consider 1976 Plan as a baseline.

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At what point can the local FS short circuit the process or over rule the process.

Who designs questions for survey and how are people chosen to be in the focus groups.

Will there be consistent application of decisions across the states.

Balance of agency teams so all forests are represented equally.

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All user groups studied off of same criteria.

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Doug Tom – Not enough info at this point.

Don – Proxy analysis is not applicable or relevant in this study.

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Clarify what the process is?

State specifics.

Clarify who users are in the capacity analysis.

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Confusing.

Seems focused on managing behavior of meeting participants instead of focus on topic.

Not under control.

Need to better clarify information before asking specific questions. For example – clarify that likely boater use times, when water is high, are not likely fishing times.

“We don't even have a map”.

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Bringing the groups together (positive) .

Input from both sides.

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LAC – How do you define the baseline level of use and environment quality criteria?

LAC – Change from what?

Why are we assuming the river above 28. Should be separated into zones?

Will zoning be based solely on bridge access?

Why are one user group being confined to user “trial”? When other groups will not? EG

– Fishing “trials” hiking “trials”, etc.

Must allow a use to study it.

Collection of data in use must apply evenly across all uses.

Everyone must register – all users treated equally in study.

Permitting should be applied equally.

Count humans and user groups using resource – can start now

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The study ought to analyze river use below 28. How is that working out?

What is happening on over flow creek and the double culvert?

I don't like that they have pre determine that it will be done in zones. That should be part of this process.

What zones are you looking at? Right now there are 3 zones (scenic, wild, recreation) above 28.

There should have been additional consideration of the type of process to employ. The LAC isn't the only process.

It would have been nice to have the handouts prior to meeting. Would like handouts prior to future meetings.

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4 ISSUES/CONCERNS/OPPORTUNITIES THE PROCESS NEEDS TO ADDRESS

Floating must be permitted during the process, along with other uses, in order to have a meaningful result/analysis.

Any limitation on any proposed use must apply equally and equitably to all proposed uses.

Dissatisfied with description of issue (for example, are we looking at commercial rafting trips on the Head waters)

Need assurance that final decision will not include an all-out ban or any one type of wilderness use.

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Overpopulation

Protect environment

LAC-trials publish IF schedule

Where does it end – if boats, what's next

How

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USFS turning this into wade-v-row?

Creating polarized differences between user groups

User groups (any) need to be manned for special impacts

Analysis needs to equitably study ALL user groups

What is set baseline for LAC, should include boating

What about put-ins/access, cost?

Trash pick up? Construction potential? Bathrooms?

Consideration of Infra structure to minimize resource impact

Permitting for all user groups during the study

Must allow paddling during study

Where are all user groups

Preferred locations

Flow preference of user groups % paddle A B flow (see his sheet)

Seasonality of uses

Time of day/year of uses

Protection of Resource (Should not get lost in the process/should be THE priority

Process should focus to limiting USE not users or user types if needed

LAC should look at limits on all uses and opportunity to provide for all uses

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Meaning of wild & scenic

Consider how many W&S locations are left on East coast

Consider everyone's right to enjoy and/or be banned from this section

Ex: can non-commercial small rafts navigate? What about a flay fisherman's right to solitude and access.

Propose to only open it to foot traffic

Comprehensive assessment of wildlife & habitats

Please consider that this is one of the last "wild" sections of the river – keep it that way.

How can you say commercial interests will not be involved? They will be interested at some point in the future. How will you ensure that this will never be considered?

How can we verify that this use will not be detrimental? To maintain the integrity of the river wilderness environment in the watershed.

I am concerned about non-commercial and commercial duckie trips (and rented duckies)

Will people w/rental equipment be allowed access? How will you make sure that they have adequate skills to be there for safety?

We want to be sure that commercial interests don't steamroll environmentalists

Will shuttle permits be given to private companies

We need to define the geographic area in question. How far up above 28 Bridge is an issue?

Will people be allowed to put in as far up as whiteside?

If this is opened up, will you reconsider the user fees. How will they be considered (both private and commercial)

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Water quality

Water volume (high vs. low)

Flow preferences for user groups

Private property concerns

Erosion/User-created trails

Wildlife

User conflict issues

Litter

Legal issues – is the entire section legally navigable?

Ensure that river does not become substandard?

Boating trials should be allowed throughout study period.

Boating should NOT be allowed.

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Access areas – how managed – what types camping/y or n.

Environmental Impact – both low and high all users and differentiated within user groups.

Boater trials – for specific user groups do not need to be limited to specific user groups
no new trails needed.

No new/additional development.

Solitude issue – issues are mutual, exclusive, i.e., boaters need high water, little fish at these levels.

Do not disrupt pro-creational opportunities.

Soft mgt – allow river levels maintain & separation of users.

Allow parking to regulate # of users.

River uses can be self-regulating (water level) (naturally)

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All user groups studied off of same criteria; studies that look @ different water levels and how that affects use of the river among the difference users. Know times and methods of data collection.

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Doug – Make sure ALL users are considered. Hikers, photographer, hikers. Forecast 15-30 yr. Use by all user groups. Boaters that concern anglers are not involved.

Charlie – Study information carefully from initial decision.

Tom – Try to determine how many boaters would use Chattooga. Infrastructure, access points impact. See study on boaters impact to fish.

Don – Does not want info from previous study.

Can't do by proxy again.

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Field trip/information about the area clarified.

Will the public meeting and public opinion impact the final decision?

Clarify who is using the river at difference times yr/water level.

Show analytical data for decisions you make.

How will you establish indicators and how will they be equitable?

How can you clearly assign an indicator or effect to specific user groups.

Is this feasible time and money to establish. Give us information for this cost up front.

Establish a test period all user group access and study that?

If you're doing an impact study, all user groups must equitable be allowed to use the river above 28.

Define the user groups.

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1. Search and rescue funding
2. Who will pay?
3. Who will train S&R.
4. Make sure equitable process despite historic precedents (All activities).
5. Small section should be closed to boating.
6. How does "boating" impact solitude?

Where will people park?

Will USFS develop parking areas and toilets.

How much use (boaters) will occur?

Concern about an explosion of use.

How will use numbers be controlled.

Will there be a permit or fee process.

Want horse access to wilderness.

Want equitable access with all user groups.

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Respect your neighbor finite resource.

Protect the solitude of the river.

Protect the delayed harvest.

Open for limited use/trial during this period.

Whatever the decision, the rule/regulation must be enforced.

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I want the area to be preserved and pristine.

You should limit use to protect the resource.

No commercial use.

Search and rescue expense.

Unlimited use or no access for ALL groups. Should be the baseline for LAC process including river management during the study.

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Resources, user conflicts, law enforcement concerns, appropriateness of the users.

Paddling, fishing, hunting, hiking lots of horses, camping, bird watching, nature walks, picnicking, hem lock protection., swimming, tubing??

Cashiers sewage treatment plan empties into Chattooga – water quality impact on wildlife and local communities aquatic resources.

Timing – seasonal?

Rock hounding and gold panning.

Archeological resources.

What do the residents of the area want?

User trials.

Insure all users have a fair and equitable chance. If banning boating part of the time then there should be bans on fishing, camping, hiking, horses, etc. As part of this testing they

should require everyone to register. Apply mandatory safety factors to all person IN the river.

Initially there should be unlimited floating to determine whether that exceeds available capacity.

Address access at the upper part of the river-Grimshawes – it is barricaded by the homeowners.

Suitable access points – parking.

Clarify or define what constitutes a user conflict.

The potential impact of any user group on the resource needs to be the first priority. (For example: the impact of camping on stream beds).

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There should be a public hearing to include all users.

Why would anyone want to raft above 28?

What's parking capacity?

None of alternatives represent my views – how can different alternatives be blended to reflecting views.

Email/website.

Meeting. I want to be involved in user trials.

All users numbers must be counted.

Newspaper/radio to publize meetings – events in process.

Analyze peak times for things – when difference users want to be.

The FS “dances” around what the question really is?

The question is not why boating should be allowed, the starting point for analyzing should be an open river as was the case in 1974 when river became WSR and the question should be why should the floating be banned.

The capacity analysis should not consider commercial use.

Should permits be required for ALL users.

A boaters “solitude” is just as important any other user solitude.

Making river WSR excluded users from river corridor.

Access should be equal for everyone.

Why has FS organized this as anglers vs. boaters.

FS must demonstrate why banning floating enhances the river's ORVs?

All alternatives must include boating in some fashion.

#5 ANYTHING YOU WANT US TO KNOW AS WE ALL BEGIN THIS COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

Organize the organization

Enforce rules!

Horses

Equal studies

Define “Impacts” baseline

Needs to be local not RO

Regional Forester influenced by Lobbyists?

Local voice needs to be heard

National River

Precedent for denying boaters

Only W&S

Trail users need Rep

Chattooga special because it's currently not badly overcrowded

Value remoteness unique = importance

What about fish

Not fair to exclude boat

Leave it like it is

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More substance to meetings

USFS should offer more specific content to comment on

Ban is illegal – reverse it now

Please share from the original WSR studies/recommendations re: access to boating as a potential starting point for discussion

Avoid zoning/emphasize education on tolerance

Consider other WSR use allowances and users (NC and nationwide).

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I don't think this is a good idea.

I think this would favor a group of users unfairly over all others.

This is a waste of our time – it should stay the way it is.

The appeal process needs to end somewhere.

After a while, the more you open up the more of the wilderness experience you lose.

Little by little these small changes will threaten the integrity of the Wild & Scenic River Act.

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User groups should be given equal opportunity.

End process as quickly as possible. Don't waste the tax payer \$. Answer is obvious.

Not streamlined enough

Kind like the process.

Should have done this to start with.

Free country – low impact activities should be allowed.

The anti-boater bias (against) represented at regional level should be removed from this process.

Can a collaborative (honest) process happen in this region?

Is it possible for GA/NC assume direction of the river. (lead role) Piedmont – Sumter is more of.

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Trends in user levels over time from 1970s to present.

Studies that reflect user's effects on environment as well as on each other = kayaker – fisherman and fisherman-hiker, etc. (conflict?)

(Meeting times) I would prefer Clayton, GA on weeknight.

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Public education needed to match resource to appropriate types of use

Ex. Type of craft to section of river or expectation of amount of TIME needed to complete a section.

How does this decision affect public v. private uses.

Nice to walk in and not interact with boaters.
Where is documentation of how decision was reached.
Restriction is unclear w/out this information.
Need to clarify user groups to public
Ex – opinion is that it is a relatively small group of people interested in boating.
Suggestion: provide a time to test use – a “trial period” open to boaters to get reasonable idea of likely boater use.
Where is DATA on effects on fishing.
Seems like there is a natural segregation that occurs between desired fishing use and desired boating use.
Concern expressed about loss of solitude.
Counter argument: if folks are educated about water levels the disruptions of solitude will be minimal – more sporadic.
Current use patterns on overflow creek might be used to estimate boater traffic.
If boating is allowed – where would you access – the bridges? Would access points need to be added.
Each user group should be able to list their priorities – will develop understanding of common ideas v. conflicts.
Concern: is FS going to be able to handle/manage/clean-up after – greater use of upper sections.

Seems like this meeting was set up to avoid actually dealing with people.
Ex: FS personnel standing around while we talk amongst ourselves.

No recognition in FS decision that times have changed circumstances.
Ex: better equipment offsetting fatalities.
Ex: folks fishing for difference reasons and in fewer numbers than 30 years ago.
Consider making access more challenging to limit over use, i.e., longer hikes into river access points vs dropping in at a bridge.

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Allow the public to supplement these lists and submit new questions after they have had a chance to review all comments. Possibly on the website.

How often are meetings?

Post a schedule?

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Feedback on next meetings

Day of week?

- Friday afternoon or evenings (2)
- Thursday or Friday evenings
- Not Monday or Friday
- Saturday mornings for working people (2)
- Early weekends

Location?

- Walhalla (4)
- Clayton (3)

- Clayton Civic Center
- Highlands, NC (2)
- Satolah, Ga, Firehouse Community Room
- Rabun Gap Nacoochee School (7 mi. N of Clayton)

Format?

Only one meeting

Later time so you can eat after work, but before the meeting

These items were listed together:

Clayton – Tuesdays, evenings

Clayton – Civic Center

Clayton – Friday evenings, afternoon

Highlands, NC – Thursday or Friday evenings

Weekends early in Walhalla