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To:	comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject:	Chatooga comments
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Jerome Thomas
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To whom it may concern and most especially the Chattooga planning team,

Once again I find myself writing a letter that seems to me should not need to be written. Yet the actions of the forest service have necessitated that all concerned and rational citizens must mobilize to wrestle fair use of the Chattooga from the strangle hold of the U.S. Forest Service and the special interest group Trout Unlimited.

I am shocked and appalled that anyone who has been in the "wilderness" would not have a better first hand knowledge of actual user impact. I am a boater and as such you will no doubt find my informal statements to be biased. All I ask is that you really think about what I have to say with an unbiased attitude.

I find it hard to believe that any fisherman or forest service employee has ever picked up a single piece of trash left intentionally by a boater. However, I am equally as sure that most boaters have indeed picked up trash left by the many fishermen. All of the beer cans, the wads of line needing to be cut from the trees, the many bait cups, none of which are used by boaters.

How many banks have been eroded to allow a fisherman access to "his" river? And in the area in question we all know of the many miles of unauthorized trails. Boaters in turn will typically establish a put in and a take out and do to the permanent nature of these areas they can be made in a sustainable manner.

I will not pretend that boaters won't exit their boat to scout a rapid. Nor will I pretend that this won't impact the environment. However compared to the damage already done and continuing to be done by

other users in the area the boater impact is minimal to non existent. Point in fact all of the damage done to this point has been at the hands of all user groups except boaters, obviously due to the illegal boating ban.

This brings me to my biggest concern, stocking of the river with a non-native species. This supersedes all of my other concerns. This is an abomination and it disgusts me that the Forest Service would allow such a direct and damaging ecological nightmare to occur. Irregardless of the outcome of your illegal boating ban you can rest assured that stopping the stocking of non-native fish will always be a concern to me.

It is obvious that proper management has never been the goal. The show that was put on with all of the comments and delays was just that, a show. In my heart I believe that option four, effectively banning boating on the upper Chattooga, was always going to be your choice. It is absurd to think that this option would in anyway create equality for all users and would actually work in any fashion.

I for one will never be satisfied until all restrictions on non-motorized watercraft are lifted, and the appalling practice of non-native stocking is stopped. Notice please that I do not wish to stop fishing wholesale. Fishermen deserve equal access to the river. They do not deserve to have their helicopter buzzing low and dropping their non-native fish in the river. Also being a birdwatcher and a hiker, I believe this detracts from my "wilderness" experience.

My family has always been active in the outdoors from bird watching to camping to helping with environmental studies. As a child I always admired the guys who I perceived as taking care of the places that I loved. It is funny that I still felt this way into early adulthood. I of course realized that your jobs were not glamorous, nor did you do it for the money. Yet I still held you in the highest regard, you protected and managed the places I love.

Now I know better. When I see the Forest Service uniform, where I used to feel respect and a bit of envy, I now feel only disappointment. You are not the heroes of the wilderness I believed you to be. You are controlled by a private interest group, and you have forsaken your responsibilities to take **all** users into consideration. By taking the actions you have, you have proven that science, real world management and equality are not principals of the forest service. You work for Trout Unlimited.

Maybe the Forest Service has always been this way and my youthful

eyes simply could not grasp the fact, I don’t know. What I do know is that my view of the U.S. Forest Service is now tarnished by the filth of an upstream fish hatchery. When I was ten I would have given any thing to be a part of the Forest Service, now I would just be ashamed.

Sincerely,

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