From:	JMCA
To:	comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject:	Upper Chattooga Comments
Date:	08/15/2008 03:57 PM

August 15, 2008

Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service, Southern Region
4931 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29212

Dear Sirs,

The Jackson-Macon Conservation Alliance submits these comments regarding the Draft EA for the upper Chattooga National Wild and Scenic River. Our organization is a local environmental voice for the Highlands-Cashiers plateau and the headwaters region of the Chattooga River in western North Carolina. Our 650 members and visitors to this area enjoy the many recreational opportunities afforded by the upper Chattooga River, and appreciate its wild natural beauty.

The upper Chattooga is a designated Wild and Scenic river deserving protection. We have witnessed an increase in visitors and consequently the impact from their use of this fragile natural resource. Additional users, such as boating, ATVs, or horses, will only intensify the rate of deterioration of this resource.

Our concerns about boating in particular are: the need to portage around dead fall and non-navigable sections causing bank erosion and USFS prohibited tree removal; difficult, expensive and dangerous rescue, user created campsites and access points; added litter and human generated waste; overall degeneration of solitude and wilderness experience. Given the fact that this area is already seeing increased visitor use under its current management, opening the river to another recreational activity without the capacity to manage it will surely be detrimental to the river.

We have concerns about the USFS adding additional management responsibilities in the face of decreasing budgets and personnel. We question how the USFS expects to control any of the suggested boating options or alternative usages under its current structure. Therefore, who will monitor this added use? The local citizens who now clean-up after the swimmers and visitors?

We are disappointed that a single interest group can put pressure on the USFS to the point of it being willing to add a high impact use to an environmentally sensitive area, and where alternative locations (lower reaches of the river) are already available. The preferred

Alternative IV in the EA Draft is conditional acceptable provided that the USFS can demonstrate the ability to manage, fund, staff and enforce this choice. J-MCA is seriously concerned that the USFS will not be able to meet these responsibilities. If that is the case, then no boating at all on the upper Chattooga River would be the best alternative.

Sincerely,

David M. Bates
Executive Director
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