From:	Thomas Williams
To:	comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject:	I support Chattooga Alternative 8
Date:	08/14/2008 10:14 PM

Dear Sumter National Forest,

I am a 17 year old high school student, a North Carolina resident and I have been an avid kayaker for the past 6 years. I have grown up partaking in this amazing sport and through it I have learned to take care of the precious resources we have available in our rivers. If I eat lunch on the river, I pack out my trash, and anything - fishing line, plastic bags, or bait containers - that I see laying, or floating, around. I have observed other paddlers do the same; none of us want to see our rivers waste away.

I have, like many paddlers and anglers, been following the recent assessment of the 32 year boating ban on the Upper Chattooga River. And I, like so many other paddlers, feel that the ban is not only based upon zero evidence that boating negatively impacts the area, but also that the ban is unjustified and singles out and excludes boaters from enjoying the Upper Chattooga. Furthermore, the wild, scenic and solitary experience that fisherman seek is based off of hunting a non-native, farm raised and invasive species; the experience is hardly wild. And while they argue that boaters will interrupt their fishing experience, any fisherman with experience would not be on the river at boatable flows. The EA tried to solve this problem by inventing a "daily mean flow" that must be calculated prior boating the Upper Chattooga. This calculation is ludicrous. The EA has essentially continued a 32 year ban by implementing boating criteria that are almost impossible to meet.

The fact is, most paddlers aren't at the elite level required to boat the Upper Chattooga. The hoards of rafts, duckies, and beginner kayakers seen on the Nantahala, Ocoee, and other rivers in the area would not exist on the Upper Chattooga. Regardless, I have always learned that denying rights to a group, no matter how small, is incredibly dangerous. I am ashamed that my government would support such, but for the past 32 years they have. By upholding the boating ban and setting the precedent that boating bans are legitimate, we risk closing rivers everywhere to many other low impact activities. That is why I believe that the Environmental Assessment proposal is unacceptable and instead support unlimited boating in Alternative 8.

Thank you,
Thomas Williams
Greenville, NC