From:	BClay
To:	comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject:	Upper Chattooga Managment Proposal
Date:	08/18/2008 10:50 PM
Attachments:	clay_comments_draftea_august08.doc

Dear Chattooga Planners,

Please find my comments below. I have also attached the same comments as an MS WORD file.

Thanks
Butch Clay

From: Butch Clay
10320 Highlands Highway
Mountain Rest, SC 29664
864 638 7885

To: Chattooga Planning Team
U.S. Forest Service
Francis Marion/Sumter National Forest
4391 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29212

Via E-Mail, To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us

August 18, 2008

Re: Upper Chattooga River Management Proposals

Dear Chattooga Planning Team:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in response to your July 2, 2008 "Draft EA" for the Management of Recreational Uses on the Upper Chattooga River.

I ask that you continue the current zoning of the Chattooga River, and that you continue to prohibit all floating above Highway 28 Bridge. I believe that the current regulations that limit boating to the lower sections of the river below Russell Bridge are fair, entirely legal, and wholly necessary in order to safeguard the irreplaceable wilderness values and biological diversity of the Chattooga headwater reaches.

We hear much about the necessity of "compromise" in the current, heated debate over possible recreational kayaking access to the headwaters. However, we do well to recall that the regulations now in place are themselves the product of a fair, just and far-sighted ***compromise*** that was put in place some thirty years ago, when the first Chattooga management plans inaugurated the first zoning regulations.

That initial compromise has worked well, both to absorb the unforeseen, astronomical increase in recreational boating visitation to the lower reaches, and to protect and enhance the wild and scenic wilderness values of the headwaters, while reserving the upper river reaches for foot travel access only.

We should also note that those managers who put in place the first zoning regulations--whether by design or by accident--were planting the seeds for the nurturance of a wild, wilderness headwater reach the likes of which we can never find elsewhere in this region. Should we now let that profoundly wise and hopeful thirty year investment in an irreplaceable American legacy of wildness and rugged Southern Appalachian beauty be significantly diminished at the behest of well funded, powerfully-placed recreational access lobbyists, we shall have purchased perhaps but a fleeting and temporary respite from current and future clamorous calls of those who will always want more "use," more "access," and a bigger piece of the Chattooga “pie.”

I therefore request that the Forest Service enact some version of Alternatives

2 or 3, in order to protect and enhance those outstanding resource values (ORVs) that caused the Chattooga to be designated officially "Wild and Scenic" in the first place. If that decision must entail reasonable and well-planned refinements or further restrictions on current foot-travel-only visitation for the headwater reaches, I will support those new regulations.

Finally, in recognition of the unenviable task before the Forest Service of making a decision that in any event may be unpopular with a lot of people, I humbly implore USFS managers to hold firm in the compromise position already taken thirty years ago. That compromise has worked well and can continue to work well for generations to come. We need strong leadership and far-sighted planning if we may hope to pass on to our children's children the gift of this river in any condition as wild, beautiful, free and untrammeled as that which we ourselves have enjoyed and benefited from.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Butch Clay
clay_butch@bellsouth.net

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