From: dancytron@charter.net
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
cc: dancytron@yahoo.com
Subject: Chattooga River Project
Date: 07/16/2008 09:30 PM

U.S. Forest Service
Chattooga River Project
Via email
comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us

July 17, 2008

RE: Chattooga River Project Comments

To whom it may concern:

I am a whitewater paddler from the St. Louis area. Unless there is some sort medical miracle that ends the aging process, the odds of me personally acquiring the skills to paddle the Upper Chattooga are slim to none. However, I am writing to express my dissatisfaction with the unfair and arbitrary proposal for the Upper Chattooga.

What your proposed course of action ensures is that the decision on how to manage the Upper Chattooga will be made by the courts, instead of the Forest Service. Is that really what you want?

I have read all the documents, including most of the comments made in the past.
The only possibly valid consideration raised are that paddlers will temporarily cause trout to "go down" (not bite) and that fishermen do not want to see kayakers. Assuming these are valid considerations, Both can be dealt with by inconveniencing all users (kayakers and fishermen), instead of implementing an almost total ban on kayaking.

For example, it could be done by limiting group sizes and establishing time slots for putting on. If kayakers (who by nature aren't early risers) are not allowed to put on before 9 am or after 1 pm, fishermen will have an uninterrupted experience upstream of the bridges until at least 12 pm (which is when most/the best fishing occurs anyway). Then, they could simply move downstream of the access point after 1 pm, and have another uninterrupted experience until the end of the day.
This could be staggered on the various sections. Any real user capacity analysis that looked at when fishing actually occurred and where kayakers would be during different parts of the day would have shown this as a viable alternative.

However, the Forest Service has not looked at the whole picture, merely what a small group of vocal fishermen wanted. Under the proposed alternative, trout fishermen will suffer virtually no inconvenience and paddlers will suffer what amounts to a continuation of the total ban.

There is also no basis whatsever for excluding bans on the Chattooga Cliffs reach or the tributaries. There was no study of the tributaries whatsoever. If this part stands, it will simply be overturned in the courts as unsupported by any evidence.

There is also no good reason for the limitation of 450 CFS.

The most insulting is restricting paddling to the dead of winter, while the prime season when it is actually warm enough to travel to the area to paddle is totally closed.

Finally, the environmental impact of Put and Take stocking of non-native trout has not even been considered. This too constitutes a ground for the courts to overturn the Forest Services decision.

This is a public area, not a private trout park. I can only come to the conclusion that undue political influence is the basis of this decision. I plan to write my Congressman, Senator and the General Accounting Office to investigate this possible misconduct if this proposal stands. When this matter goes to court and the people responsible for this proposal are investigated and questioned under oath by competent attorneys, the truth will come out. If I was involved with this, I'd consult my personal attorney sooner, rather than later.

Hopefully the people responsible for this foolishness will be fired or demoted.

Sincerely yours,

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