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Subject: Save the Upper Chattooga River Comments
Date: 08/18/2008 10:17 AM

The following comments about saving the Upper Chattooga River were submitted via the Georgia Outdoor Network website at www.georgiaoutdoornetwork.org

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Comments:
Whitewater boating organizations are seeking access to the upper Chattooga river. Their access to this portion of the river would ruin the wild and secluded feel of the river while degrading stream quality and trout angling opportunities.

Multiple conservation organizations are fighting to retain the current zoning, which allows only foot travel in the river corridor. This zoning has made the river a premier destination for hiking, camping and trout fishing. Boater access would destroy this.

Most conservation organizations and trout anglers support the U.S. Forest Service's preferred management alternative, which would allow limited access for boaters from December through February (Alternative No. 4). The whitewater organizations don't see it that way. They have launched a nationwide campaign to flood the Forest Service with pro-boating comments.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Draft EA and preferred alternative; for involving all affected and interested parties in the analysis process through their public meetings, hearings, workshops and comment periods; for a professional, comprehensive, complete, and fair User Capacity Analysis; and for designing the preferred alternative (#4) with zoning stipulations to minimize conflict between anglers and boaters, avoiding the overuse and user conflicts that have plagued the lower Chattooga for decades.
> Zoning is a time tested, fair, and legal land and water management practice.
> Zoning of conflicting activities is good stewardship.
The preferred alternative (#4):
> Will limit camping and parking, which are needed to protect and enhance the biophysical riparian resources for future generations.
> Will enhance water quality by reducing erosion and sedimentation from visitor overuse and abuse.
> Prohibits the removal of large woody debris to accommodate boating. Large woody debris (LWD) has incredible ecological importance in river systems.
> Provides protection and enhancement of the aesthetic values of the upper Chattooga such as remoteness and wildness.
> Prevents in-stream conflict and interference in the Rock Gorge segment, which will protect and actually enhance its backcountry values of solitude and remoteness for present and future generations as required by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act:
> Prevents in-stream conflict and interference in the popular Delayed Harvest segment.
> Has the proper regard for the rights of others to solitude.
> Is a compromise that is fair to all stakeholders.
The potential environmental effects of the other alternatives:
> Alternatives 1, 2 and 3, by being boating-free, would protect and enhance for future generations the aesthetic backcountry values of the upper Chattooga such as solitude and wildness.
> Alternatives 1 does not improve the biophysical riparian conditions above Highway 28. All other alternatives protect LWD and reduce biophysical damage from trails, campsites, and roadside parking.
> Alternatives 5 and 9, by zoning for limited boating through the Wilderness and backcountry segments, would cause some deterioration of the backcountry Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV) of solitude and remoteness.
> Alternatives 8 and 10, by allowing boating through Burrell’s Ford and the Delayed Harvest segment, would create conflict and interference with existing users. These alternatives will deteriorate the quality of the recreational experience for all visitors.
Suggestions to improve the management of the upper Chattooga:
> Additional law enforcement and education of visitors are the keys to the successful implementation and administration of this plan.
> Increase the fines for violations and repeat offenders. Stiff fines are needed as deterrents.
> Instead of boater self-registration, implement an Internet based boating permit system that is activated when adequate flow is predicted.
> The Forest Service or a contract concessionary must pre-authorize “boatable” days and post this information publicly.
> This Wild and Scenic Chattooga corridor deserves an on-site, fulltime river manager to protect and preserve this national treasure for future generations.
> Involve stakeholders in the implementation and monitoring of the new management plan.
> If the Forest Service is unable to adopt these suggestions to improve management and protection, then Alternative #3 should be the preferred alternative (no boating) and use the freed up funds to restore the upper Chattooga biophysical resources.
Availability of nearby recreational alternatives:
> For boaters, there are many nearby alternatives. Diverse whitewater boating opportunities with unrestricted access exist on over 60% of the length of the Chattooga.
> Diverse whitewater boating opportunities with unrestricted access exist on all other public streams on all surrounding National Forests.
> West Fork /Overflow Creek with unrestricted boating is slightly more difficult than the upper Chattooga. Overflow and the upper Chattooga are likely to experience the same rain events.
> For anglers, the upper Chattooga offers a unique fishing experience with the solitude and scenery, as well as the

quality of the trout fishery, which is not found on other trout rivers in this region.
> For anglers, the boat-free upper Chattooga has uniqueness not found in any other river in the south and east.

I believe the Alternative #4 will be best for the Upper Chattooga, again because it is a compromise that is fair to all stakeholders. Thank you again for a thorough analysis, and for your time and leadership.