From: David.Asbell@gtri.gatech.edu
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject: Chattooga River Project Comments
Date: 07/31/2008 01:57 PM

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672 Londonberry Rd.
Atlanta, GA 30327
July 31, 2008

U.S. Forest Service
Chattooga River Project
4931 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29212

Dear Sumter National Forest Administrator,
I have been paddling the Chattooga River regularly for 32 years. One of my most enduring impressions is paddling's negligible impact on the river. There are foot paths to the access points, generally miles apart. That is pretty much it. When a canoe or kayak has passed, the ripples abate, and all is as it was before. Fishing is generally considered to be low impact, but compared to paddling, it is not. Fishermen use the access points, but in addition they walk along the banks and on the stream bottom, creating disturbances along the entire steam length. They (when successful) hook and land fish. The stocking programs they desire have obvious impact on life in the river. Therefore it is with dismay that I see the Forest Service attempting to virtually ban boating on the Upper Chattooga, while making no attempt to regulate other wilderness-compliant uses. This seems to me discrimination against one segment of the citizenry (paddlers), solely because another segment (fishermen, and perhaps Forest Service administrators) prefers not to be around them. This is no more acceptable than discrimination based on race or religion.

The Forest Service's preference, "Alternative 4," is a de facto paddling ban masquerading as regulation. It imposes new bans on Chattooga tributaries, continues the existing ban on 2/3 of the Upper Chattooga, and allows a few (between zero and six, based on records of past flow rates) days of boating each year on the remaining 1/3 of the river, for four small groups per day, in the middle of winter only, depending on high water, USFS approval and a permit.

I support Alternative 8, except that paddling should be allowed on the entire Upper Chattooga and all its tributaries. I want to see a real user capacity analysis. I want all users to be equitably limited, but only when usage will exceed capacity for sustained periods of time.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
O. David Asbell, PE