From: Weatherford, Jeffrey R
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject: Chattoga River comments
Date: 07/31/2008 10:09 AM

U.S. Forest Service
Chattooga River Project
4931 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29212.
July 30, 2008
RE: Chattooga River Project Comments
Dear Sumter National Forest,
My name if Jeff Weatherford and I live in Elizabethton, Tn. I am writing to you in regards to the Chattooga River. It really disappoints us boaters that we are not allowed to enjoy the great water of this river. This water that flows freely through there belongs to everybody that wants to enjoy it. I am a veteran of this wonderful country and it really disturbs me that I put my life on the line for this great free land just to be told that I cannot enjoy what it has to offer. Put yourself in my shoes or anyone else who has sacrificed so much for something they cannot have for no legible reason.
I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment regarding the recreational management of the Chattooga River. I disagree with your analysis and your proposal. Both treat me and my community of river enthusiasts unfairly and your proposal would not meet my interests. Please consider the following concerns I have regarding this issue:

- No alternative is acceptable because they all include boating bans on the upper Chattooga Cliffs reach and on tributaries – without any justification. It would be one thing if there was hard evidence that us paddlers negatively affected these areas of the river but you don't. We tend to leave rivers cleaner than what they were to start off with, so how can you justify a negative impact.
- The EA and preferred alternative are not equitable or protective of the river because they consider boating to be the only management variable, while other larger more impactful uses are not seriously considered for limits. Take fishing for

example. Anglers go out with their reels and bait to catch some fine species of fish. However when they leave they tend to discard there bait containers and lure packages right there on the bank. Campers come out with their big eccentric campers and spook wild life from coming around certain areas. I think that has more of an impact than outdoor enthusiasts that paddle through and leave the area just as peaceful and beautiful as they found it. We as paddlers tend to have river clean ups where we go out and collect all the trash from the river that has washed down from other areas. To us it doesn't matter where the trash come from or who is responsible. We pick it up so not only us, but everyone else can enjoy the natural beauty of mother nature. So why are we the only ones being punished? Why are we being segregated against because we use man powered boats that do not have an ecological impact on rivers.

- The USFS preferred alternative includes a total ban on 2/3 of the upper river, a ban on tributary boating, and allows only 0-6 days of limited boating on the remaining reach – while allowing all other wilderness conforming existing uses in unlimited numbers.. This is not equitable and not acceptable!
- The USFS has spent thirteen years searching for a reason to limit paddling on the Chattooga and has found *none*. It is time to open the river to boating and it needs to be done now. Why is it that we are being punished for conserving and enjoying nature. Thirteen years to find a reason to stop boating because of someone being mad at someone else or whatever the case may be is just pathetic. That was thirteen years of wasted man power and money
- The EA is no better or different than the last one, is at least a year late and has wasted millions in tax payer money that could have been used to better protect our troops overseas or perfecting hydrogen as alternative fuel. This is nothing more than a misappropriation of funds and man power. This really makes me mad not only as a tax payer but as a veteran also. It is reasons like this that some people want to raise taxes instead of using that money already collected for more important issues.
- The USFS hired qualified consultants and then ignored their

input. Why hire someone to just ignore them. Once again wasting tax payer money. Whoever is authorizing these expenditures needs to really be investigated. Why is it that we can't be supported in our effort to restore beautiful rivers? Are people afraid to be apart of something that not only has a great value to the land but also might be fun.

- The public should have the right to float on public Wild and Scenic Rivers regardless of who owns the land along the river. Nobody owns the water that flows the rivers. If you think you do then I hate to tell you, but you better get one heck of a bucket to go catch it because it is not only long gone but there is a lot of it. By floating or paddling the water in no way will the land on the river banks be affected.
- So open the Chattooga River now so it can be enjoyed and used as it was meant to be.

Thank you for considering these comments. Please consider conducting a real user capacity analysis and immediately allowing boating in the same numbers, places, and seasons that you allow existing users. Paddling should be allowed in a similar manner to your alternative number 8, except on the *entire* Upper Chattooga River and its tributaries.

Thank you for considering these comments,

Sincerely

Jeff Weatherford
1227 Dry Creek Rd.
Elizabethton, Tn 37643]