From:	Catherine Whitham
To:	comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
cc:	Elizabeth Cleckler; Ann Whitham
Subject:	Chattooga River Boating Situation
Date:	07/31/2008 01:44 PM

United States Forest Service
Chattooga River Project

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to provide the following comments on your "pre-decision" notice of a preferred alternative regarding permitting of boating on the upper Chattooga River.

I am a property owner at the upper reach of the Wild and Scenic River Corridor and have been a river observer and user since before the land was in public ownership. I have followed the situation carefully and am vitally interested in seeking a balance between use and enjoyment of the Chattooga and maintaining its wild and scenic character.

I urge you to adopt Alternative 1, which maintains the current situation. However, recognizing that this choice may be too restrictive, I recommend Alternative 5.

The second best choice is Alternative 5, which would provide a quality boating experience when the river is flowing at non-fishable flow rates downstream from the Bull Pen Bridge (Iron Bridge), a place where boats may be launched with very little impact on the nearly solid rock banks and the very short trails. Established parking and camping is already available nearby.

Alternative 4, on the other hand, would provide a lesser quality boating experience at higher flows in a reach where the limited access to the river already helps preserve its near pristine character. There are several drawbacks to this choice:

• The impending death of the many giant hemlocks (a result of the wooly adelgid infestation) that line the river in this reach will soon result in timber falls that will clog the river for boats for many years to come. Conversely, the deadfalls will likely have a positive result on the fishery.

• The County Line Trail is quite long from Whiteside Cove Road to the river. Very limited parking is available only along the road shoulder and the trailhead. Additionally, the length of the County Line Trail is a limiting factor to boating
because of the long portage needed for use, actually a positive result.

Although this alternative as currently defined does not appear to involve the nearby Cane Creek Road for access, the opening of this route for vehicles could become a logical "betterment" for boating that would lead to the negative result of introducing new vehicular traffic within the Wild and Scenic River Corridor nearer the river.

Thank you again for the opportunity of providing these comments, which I hope will help influence your final decision. Once again, I recommend that

you choose Alternative 5 instead of Alternative 4.

Sincerely,

Catherine Cranston Whitham