From:	Claire Hews
To:	comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject:	Chattooga River Project
Date:	08/05/2008 09:19 AM

U.S. Forest Service
Chattooga River Project
4931 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29212.
comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us

August 5, 2008

RE: Chattooga River Project Comments

Dear Sumter National Forest,

My name is Claire Hews and I am a whitewater (river) kayaker of 20 years, an executive search consultant, and wilderness enthusiast living in Seattle, WA I am very concerned about unfair treatment of boaters on the Chattooga River as well as the poor precedent this sets for recreational management on other wild and scenic rivers. Everywhere else in the country, boaters are free to float the Wild and Scenic Rivers. Near Seattle we have the Skykomish River that hosts thousands of user days per year with no closures.

I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment regarding the recreational management of the Chattooga River. I don't agree with your analysis and oppose your proposal. Both treat me and my community of river enthusiasts unfairly and your proposal and would not meet my needs as a whitewater kayaker. Please consider the following concerns I have regarding this issue:

I understand that the USFS has spent thirteen years searching for reasons to continue to limit paddling on the Chattooga River and has found none. **It is time to open the river to boating – this is unprecedented. Where is this rationale coming from?**

The Environmental Assessment is not a user capacity analysis and does not reference one. The AW appeal decision **REQUIRED** a user capacity analysis. Where is it? Without this how can you say that you fairly assessed the needs of boaters? Obviously you did not, which is illegal.

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.. How is this considered fair???

Paddlers prefer an alternative similar to Alternative 8 that

1) fully allows boating on the entire Chattooga River below Grimshawes Bridge,

2) allows paddling on tributaries,

3) includes encounter standards based on a real user capacity analysis,

4) will equitably limit total use only when encounter standards are consistently exceeded,

5) will do so using all available indirect measures first.

The public should have the right to float on public Wild and Scenic Rivers regardless of who owns the land along the river.

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.

Sincerely

Claire Hews
1605 NE 73rd St.
Seattle, WA 98115

Claire Hews
206-323-7600