From:	Donald M Kelly
To:	comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject:	Chattooga Wild & Scenic River Draft Environmental Assessment
Date:	07/31/2008 07:19 PM

In response to the request for comments about the Forest Service's Upper Chattooga River Draft Environmental Assessment, please find below the comments I submitted last year in response to an earlier request for comments on the Forest Service's proposals for boaters' use of the Upper Chattooga River.

My views have not changed in the past eleven months. Your proposals for highly restricted boaters' use of the river have not progressed and remain unreasonable. Instead, your proposal should be revised radically and should permit extensive boating on the Upper Chattooga River.

Sincerely

Donald M. Kelly
Tallahassee, Florida

----- Original Message -----
From: Donald M Kelly
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Sent: Wednesday, September 12, 2007 9:30 PM
Subject: Alternatives for Managing Recreation, Chattooga Wild & Scenic River

In response to your request for comments about the six preliminary proposals for recreation management on the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River, I recommend that you proceed with none of them and instead present a new proposal that allows expanded access to all sections of the river by different types of boaters, i.e., kayakers, canoeists and rafters.

The river's boating capacity is not infinite, but also is not small. Further, for virtually the entirety of the river corridor, boaters currently have very limited impact, with the impacts essentially confined to put-ins and take-outs, with the impacts at those points not being excessive. Once a kayak, canoe or raft has passed a point on the river, it's usually difficult to tell that anyone had been there ever.

I do not propose that there be no restrictions on river use, but if there were no limits, the potential for over-use of the Chattooga is limited by two facts: 1. From the major population centers, it's not on the way to

anyplace else. Almost no one paddles the Chattooga as part of some other activity or because it fits in nicely for a planned trip. 2. It's a free-flowing river and thus can't be relied on having sufficient water for a trip planned significantly in advance. These facts dictate that most people who go the Chattooga go there only for the Chattooga and have short planning horizons. Others go to different rivers. This will not likely change.

These facts have another consequence: The boater attracted to the Chattooga tend to be the more experienced boater. Without exception that I'm familiar with, experienced boaters are highly sensitive to environmental issues regardless of their age, occupation or background. They have the knowledge and inclination to minimize resource impacts. I don't begrudge other user-groups' enjoyment of the river corridor, but on a typical trip to the Chattooga, the impact of nonboating is much more obvious than the impact from boaters. It's a myth, this image of boaters as thrill seekers whose antics destroy any possible pleasurable use of by others.

I've paddled the Chattooga more times that I can remember over the past 20 plus years, and some of the best times of my life have been on the river. This is one of the most beautiful places anywhere, but I doubt that you needed me to tell you. If anything, your management plan should seek to present more not fewer boating options. Efforts to preserve the river corridor are laudable, but excessive limits that reduce the numbers of potential users of the Chattooga also reduces the number of supporters of preservation programs and of the Wild and Scenic Rivers program.

Donald M. Kelly
Tallahassee, Florida