From:	Meg Hulme
To:	comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
cc:	akimbell@fs.fed.us
Subject:	Fw: Chattooga Comment Letter
Date:	07/31/2008 07:08 PM

To Whom it May concern:

My stress reliever is to hike in the mountains every weekend with my dogs. Generally, we hike in the North Georgia area but have been known to hike in North Carolina, Tennessee and points west. This past weekend, I even encountered a beautiful Timber Rattlesnake on my hike on the Appalacian Trail near Woody Gap. This is only the second time in 20 years of spending almost every weekend in the mountains that I have seen a rattlesnake. I greatly enjoy the opportunity to catch this rare glimpse of native Georgia wildlife.

I have sime comments regarding the EA for the Chattooga River Wilderness area.

First, is the Forest Service′s proposed management plan alternatives allow the stocking of non-native trout in the wilderness area. I find this to be a travesty. It is an environmentally unsound practice that does not belong in a federally managed wilderness area. If stocking is to be the practice, than it should be with native species only.

The non-native fish compete with native species for food, habitat, and they also eat the native species fry. The stocking of non-native trout also attracts thousands of fishermen who trample the stream banks, disrupt the stream beds, have carved 19 miles of unauthorized trails in the wilderness, and leave

fishing line and hooks dangling from the trees and abandoned in the stream bed.

As we strive to preserve our heritage, the wilderness is not a playground to be physically altered or added to for the enjoyment of user groups. It is to be protected and enjoyed in its natural state. Why in the world does the Forest Service allow an artificial recreational environment to be created in the National Forest? This practice must stop. Please consider banning the introduction of any non-native species into the wilderness area.

Second, why does the Forest Service discriminate against boaters along the Chattooga River Wilderness area? I might be able to support the ban if there was an unbiased scientific impact study to support the ban. But without a scientific impact study, something smells fishy here. Many of the areas I hike are not part of a wilderness area and I see the huge impact that horsebike riders and campers can have on an area, especially with overuse. But, I have not seen a rural area that has had negative impact from boaters. Implementing a rational use plan that limits boating during certain seasons or other reasonable measures is something I could support, as long as the restrictions have valid data behind them.

It is my request to the US Forest Service, that decisions are based on fact, not because of political or special interest pressure. And that we continue to manage our forests so that we have them around to enjoy - to see the native species in their natural environment.

Sincerely,

Margaret C. Hulme

"What is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, men would die from loneliness of spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts happens to man. All things are connected." Chief Seattle