From: keith cloud
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To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
cc: keith cloud
Subject: Upper Chattooga Recreation Comments
Date: 08/06/2008 08:00 PM

Thanks for your willingness to again accept comments, allowing me to state my concerns regarding this pristine wilderness area. I am sure that all the alternatives have been well thought out and many hours have been involved in getting us to this point. I thank each person who had a part in this worthwhile debate.

Clearly the alternatives that I prefer are of the first three presented which allow for no boating. I have visited this river and recreated by fishing, boating and hiking this beautiful pristine area. The Chattooga is a very special place, in fact I proposed to my wife on this river. It was also our first date as we set out for a nice hike and a picnic on one of the huge boulders overlooking the vibrant Chattooga River. Clearly, I recognized the beauty of the river and the beauty of the woman that I would come to marry. I was satisfied then with the management of the river and had come to know that it was truly a blessing that should someone wish to only fish, then they could enjoy a wonderful section of river above the Hwy 28 bridge. The solitude, remoteness, esthetic values, and certain intangibles have guided my thoughts concerning the proposals.

When I look at the first 3 proposals, it is definitely alternative 1 that I prefer. My reason is that it has very clear and concise points and is not filled with more upon more regulations. That is clearly the difference between alternative 1 and all of the other alternatives. The current management style is fine and has not taken away the pleasant experience of the Chattooga River. Although there is some degradation that occurs with foot travel along the river, I see very little reason to change the current management.

As of today 07-30-08 it looks like Alternative 4 appears to be the one to be recommended. Personally, this appears to be the one that most fishermen could probably live with. However, let me remind folks that once a little is given it leaves for a lot to be taken. I do not believe that this will satisfy the other side. Point blank, they want much more. As Barney Fife used to say "NIP IT."

Since 4 has been the proposal floated around, I will address in this way. I do not see a lot of extra money floating around to be dedicated to enforcement and monitoring of the those who recreate on the river. To accept a proposal allowing boating without monies in hand to enforce is quite simply a failed strategy and wasteful misuse of time. Kind of like fishing on credit. Over the past year, several areas on the Chattooga have been plagued by theft, vandalism and other types of crime. Enforcement agencies are stretched very thin and with a recommendation that will surely increase visitors, it could be much worse. Show me the MONEY and then I can be swayed for Alternative 4 or better, how about keeping alternative 1 and working on how to get more money to beef up law enforcement presence on the river.

In regards to proposals 4-6, my concerns are that the river simply cannot and should not be managed in this light. Quite simply the solitude and remoteness of this pristine river would be damaged. Removal of woody debris in order to make way for boaters could damage viable systems of ecological importance. Also, keep in mind that the Chattooga is a very fragile river. With persistent drought, water flows are at an all time low. It is during these times of low water that water temperatures become a major concern in protection of trout and the many other species of God's creation that make up the river system. Personally, I would like to see all of the river above Hwy 28 become catch and release for the whole year. We all know that with more recreation, more people are going to attempt to access the river. I seriously doubt governments ability to enforce any of the existing laws and future management of the river. Budget cuts in areas of enforcement have NOT resulted in reassuring me of an ability to enforce laws and regulations that WILL be broken. Many of you in the Forest Service and Dept of Natural Resources probably know someone that has lost a job due to budget cuts. It could be one of you who are reading this that may be next to go. Also, I have yet to believe that an increase in funding will take place.

Personally, I think this is something that some folks want so bad and they will compromise their values in order to achieve the objective. It is my belief that if they were to get what they want, the experience they are seeking will not be worth it.

I am very well aware that once an activity is established, it will be very difficult to change back to the way it was and should be. I urge you to make the correct decision to maintain and protect this beautiful pristine area. Nip it.

Sincerely and Best Fishes,

Keith Cloud

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