From:	Ken Colston
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Subject:	Upper Chattooga EA
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I have refrained from commenting on the Upper Chattooga Environmental Assessment, however, in light of my study of the EA, I feel that another voice might lend some credence to a few of the comments I have read. Protecting the Chattooga from overuse and damage caused by year round unrestricted access is critical. While not in favor of allowing boating at all from County Line Trail Road in NC to Burrell's Ford Bridge, I can accept boating for the designated time periods when the mean daily flow is 450 cfs or more assuming Alternative 4 restrictions are enforced. This compromise appears fair to most stakeholders- ***as long as it is enforced.***

While I prefer Alternative 3, Alternative 4 is acceptable, as it:

Limits camping and parking, which are needed to protect and enhance the biophysical riparian resources for future generations.

> Will enhance water quality by reducing erosion and sedimentation from visitor overuse and abuse.

> ***Prohibits the removal of large woody debris to accommodate boating. Large woody debris (LWD) has incredible ecological importance in river systems.***

> Provides protection and enhancement of the aesthetic values of the upper Chattooga such as remoteness and wildness.

> Prevents in-stream conflict and interference in the Rock Gorge segment, which will protect and actually enhance its backcountry values of solitude and remoteness for present and future generations as required by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act:

> Prevents in-stream conflict and interference in the popular Delayed Harvest segment, which will preserve economic value. DH regulations attract more specialized trout anglers coming from hundreds of miles away.

> Will enhance the quality of experience for all visitors and protects riparian resources.

> Has the proper regard for the rights of others to solitude.

Zoning ensures that different and conflicting types of users are physically separated Zoning is a time tested, fair, and legal land and water management practice. Zoning of conflicting activities is good stewardship. I believe the zoning stipulations in Alternative #4 will provide good protection for the upper Chattooga backcountry's Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV) of solitude and remoteness for

present and future generations.

The potential environmental effects of the other alternatives:

> Alternatives 1, 2 and 3, by being boating-free, would protect and enhance for future generations the aesthetic backcountry values of the upper Chattooga such as solitude and wildness.

> Alternative 1 does not improve the biophysical riparian conditions above Highway 28. All other alternatives protect LWD and reduce biophysical damage from trails, campsites, and roadside parking.

> Alternatives 5 and 9, by zoning for limited boating through the Wilderness and backcountry segments, would cause some deterioration of the backcountry Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV) of solitude and remoteness.

> Alternatives 8 and 10, by allowing boating through Burrell's Ford and the Delayed Harvest segment, would create conflict and interference with existing users. These alternatives will deteriorate the quality of the recreational experience for all visitors.

> **The range of the alternatives is all-inclusive and wide-ranging.**

Suggestions to improve the management of the upper Chattooga:

> Additional law enforcement and education of visitors are the keys to the successful implementation and administration of this plan.

> Increase the fines for violations and repeat offenders. Stiff fines are needed as deterrents.

> Instead of boater self-registration, implement an Internet based boating permit system that is activated when adequate flow is predicted.

> The Forrest Service or a contract concessionary must pre-authorize "boatable" days and post this information publicly.

> This Wild and Scenic Chattooga corridor deserves an on-site, fulltime river manager to protect and preserve this national treasure for future generations.

> Involve stakeholders in the implementation and monitoring of the new management plan.

> If the Forest Service is unable to adopt these suggestions to improve management and protection, then Alternative #3 should be the preferred alternative (no boating) and use the freed up funds to restore the upper Chattooga biophysical resources.

# # #

Availability of nearby recreational alternatives:

> For boaters, there are many nearby alternatives. Diverse whitewater boating opportunities with unrestricted access exist on over 60% of the length of the Chattooga.

> Diverse whitewater boating opportunities with unrestricted access exist on all other public streams on all surrounding National Forests.
> West Fork /Overflow Creek with unrestricted boating is slightly more difficult than the upper Chattooga. Overflow and the upper Chattooga are likely to experience the same rain events.
> For anglers, the upper Chattooga offers a unique fishing experience with the solitude and scenery, as well as the quality of the trout fishery, which is not found on other trout rivers in this region.
> For anglers, the boat-free upper Chattooga has uniqueness not found in any other river in the south and east.

Thank you for your diligence and perseverance in evaluating proper stewardship of this area, and providing a forum for comments.

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