From: G.L. Ellerman
Reply To: gingerellerman@yahoo.com
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject: Comments re: Chattooga River Project
Date: 08/09/2008 01:30 PM

U.S. Forest Service
Chattooga River Project
4931 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29212.

August 9, 2008

RE: Chattooga River Project Comments

Dear Sumter National Forest,

Hello. I'm writing to provide public input regarding the Chattooga River Project.

I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment (EA) regarding the recreational management of the Chattooga River. I disagree with your analysis and your proposal. Both of these treat me and my community of river enthusiasts unfairly and your proposal reflects neither my nor my community's best interests. Please consider the following concerns I have regarding this issue:

-The EA and preferred alternative are not equitable or protective of the river because they consider boating to be the only management variable, while other larger more impactful uses are not seriously considered for limits.

-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.. This is neither equitable nor acceptable!

-The EA offers no basis for the boating bans and limits

-The EA lacks a full range of alternatives

-The 450 CFS average daily flow trigger in the preferred alternative is a flawed measure that should be eliminated from any considerations. There is no way a paddler can know this number and it will be an administrative burden for the agency.

-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, and 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.

-All aspects of the "Outstanding Remarkable Values" of Wild and Scenic Rivers should be protected on the entire river, not just in some areas.

Please consider conducting a real user capacity analysis and 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.

The USFS has spent thirteen years searching for a reason to limit paddling on the Chattooga and has found none. It is time to open the river to boating.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

G.L. Ellerman
P.O. Box 7771
Columbus GA 31908