From: Chan Jones
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject: Comments - Upper Chattooga River
Date: 08/07/2008 11:24 PM

U.S. Forest Service

Chattooga River Project

4931 Broad River Road

Columbia, SC 29212.

comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us

August 8, 2008

RE: Chattooga River Project Comments

Dear Sumter National Forest,

My name is Chandler Jones. I live half an hour north of the Chattooga River in Franklin, NC. I have always lived here and I enjoy whitewater paddling and other outdoor pastimes, including fishing. I am a student working toward education as a North Carolina Registered Nurse but I also work at the Nantahala Outdoor Center in Bryson City, NC as a kayak instructor, photographer, and retail salesperson. I am also a professional kayak athlete sponsored by Pyranha Kayaks, Immersion Research, and Patagonia, who has held berths on multiple US Canoe/Kayak teams and competed in many national and international competitions. After I began paddling, I spent considerable time practicing my skills in the Chattooga River watershed and I associate many good memories with my time spent there. Consequently, the Chattooga River holds a place near and dear to my heart.

I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment regarding the recreational management of the Chattooga River. I disagree with your analysis and your proposal. Both treat me and my community of river enthusiasts unfairly and your proposal would not meet my interests. Please consider the following concerns I have regarding this issue:

- 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.
- No alternative is acceptable, or even fair, because they all include boating bans on the upper Chattooga Cliffs reach and on tributaries – without any justification or regulation of other wilderness activities.
- The EA and preferred alternative are not equitable or protective of the river because they considers 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 a maximum of 6 days of limited boating on the remaining reach – while allowing all other wilderness conforming existing uses in unlimited numbers. This is not equitable and not acceptable! If the boating ban is to be held in place, similar bans toward fishing, hunting, hiking, swimming, and other activities should be put into place to. It is unacceptable for one group of users to be excluded from enjoying a public resource such as the Upper Chattooga.
- The EA offers no basis for the boating bans and limits
- The EA is no better or different than the last one, is at least a year late and has wasted millions in tax payer money
- The USFS hired qualified consultants and then ignored their input
- 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.

Thank you for considering these comments. Please consider conducting a real user capacity analysis and immediately 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.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Chandler Jones

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Franklin, NC 28734