From: Ben Gregg
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject: Upper Chattooga River
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Comments via E-Mail and U.S. Mail

USDA Forest Service
Francis Marion and Sumter National Forest
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COMMENTS OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA WILDLIFE FEDERATION CONCERNING THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE'S ALTERNATIVES FOR THE UPPER CHATTOOGA RIVER

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed alternatives for the Upper Chattooga River. South Carolina Wildlife Federation, founded in 1931, is the state's oldest conservation organization with 8,000 members who enjoy South Carolina's outdoors.

The Federation would have preferred Alternative 3 which was a "no change" management policy from the policy that had been in effect for the past 30 years. We recognize, however, that the Forest Service must listen to all its stakeholders and develop a compromise policy, while still protecting the values that made the Chattooga a wild and scenic river in the first place. Therefore, we are willing to accept Alternative 4 because it maintains a "foot travel only" policy for the river from Burrells Ford Bridge to the Highway 28 Bridge. While Alternative 4 does allow limited boating on the upper river from County Line Road Trail down to Burrells Ford Bridge, it does so only under very restrictive conditions when anglers and other users will not likely be on the river. Alternative 4 does address current problems associated with overuse of the Upper Chattooga, i.e., it promises to close or rehabilitate non-designated camping sites along the upper river, and to restrict parking to

areas ¼ mile or further from Burrells Ford Bridge.

The Upper Chattooga is a treasure to the many hunters, anglers, hikers, bird watchers, swimmers, and others who take advantage of the outstanding remarkable values (ORVs) this wild country offers. Alternative 4 zones the river to protect it from overuse and from conflicts among users. Zoning is a time-tested and legal method of managing forested watersheds and the rivers within these watersheds. Zoning helps to minimize conflicts among different types of river use and will be even more necessary in the future as the number of users increase.

Protection of the river's ORVs is the primary concern of the South Carolina Wildlife Federation. The Forest Service is mandated to protect these values. We urge the Forest Service to allocate the funds and the manpower necessary to enforce protection of the Upper Chattooga. We suggest a full-time river keeper be hired to patrol the Chattooga and that a progressive fine system be implemented to discourage boaters who illegally float the Upper Chattooga or who remove large woody debris from the river channel. Enforcement is the only way that Alternative 4 will successfully protect the river's ORVs.

Thanks you for this opportunity to comment.

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