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Subject:	Chattooga River Visitor Use Capacity
Date:	08/06/2008 10:45 AM

Chattooga River Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) Comment:

Thank you for the planning process that allows public input. As a life-long boater and trout fisherman, I understand both concerns; but, I also appreciate the wisdom of the current management scheme as implemented in the 1970's under Chief Forester Donald Eng which has been a fair and time proven resolution to a major multiple use issue on a national significant resource.

The number one recommendation is for **Alternative 3**. Prohibiting boating above the Highway 28 Bridge is essential in preserving the extremely successful delayed harvest trout fishery located just above Highway 28; and, especially the wilderness experience from foot traffic only along the upper river. Also, safety will be enhanced by prohibiting boating through the stretch below Burrells Ford with such limited access, and that includes Big Bend Falls and the gorge stretch below it. Most importantly, it preserves the current zoning that has segregated competing uses with foot traffic only allowed above Highway 28, and floating allowed only in the over 30 miles of river below there.

The number two recommendation is for **Alternative 4** which uses zoning as an appropriate tool for resource and recreation management in the long USFS tradition of multiple use management. While this alternative provides some limited boating, it would provide some separation of competing recreationists as drafted. The use of zoning to do that is an important and valid tool to be protected, and that is the a kay issue along with protection of the resources and the outdoor experience of the public. However if boating is to be permitted at all in the Chattooga anywhere above Highway 28, then a trout fishery should be developed again in the river below there by the US Forest Service and the Georgia and SC Departments of Natural Resources. That trout fishery existed there into the 1970's and was wildly popular. It was abandoned only because of the heavy boating traffic since the segregation of uses which shrank the managed trout fishery to only the river above Highway 28.

Additional comment: Regardless of which alternative is selected, visitor use

must be addressed because of the degradation of the resource from overuse, especially at the Burrells Ford Bridge. Restriction of visitation to protect the resource is appropriate, whether done by parking limitations, permits, fees, etc. An example is on the upper Arkansas River in Colorado where the BLM has leased public access/parking areas to the Colorado Parks Department. They control and manage the number of visitors through management of those fee sites, while also providing limited facilities and law enforcement patrols.

Thank You, Malcolm Leaphart, Columbia, SC 08/06/2008