From: Ross George
To: comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us
Subject: Chattooga River Project Comments
Date: 08/07/2008 03:31 PM

Dear Sumter National Forest,

I am an avid outdoorsman who has grown up in Atlanta and kayaked the Chattooga river for many years. I also now have a residence in Clayton, so Chattooga issues are close to home. The Chattooga has played an important role in my life-I can't explain how much I have learned from that river. It and the forests that surround it are 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 only not meet my interests, but contradict them directly. 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.
* The EA is not a user capacity analysis and does not reference one. The AW appeal decision required a user capacity analysis. Where is it?
* No alternative is acceptable because they all include boating bans on the upper Chattooga Cliffs reach and on tributaries - without any justification.
* 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 EA offers no basis for the boating bans and limits. Furthermore, the public should have the right to float on public Wild and Scenic Rivers regardless of who owns the land along the river.
* It is telling that the USFS hired qualified consultants and then ignored their input.
* 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 will be an administrative burden for the agency.
* 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 and receiving the opinions of all parties involved and affected. 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.

Respectfully,

Ross George

3468 Knollwood Dr.
Atlanta, GA 30305