

Chattooga River Public Comments
July 3, 2007 - July 31, 2007

Gunn July 3, 2007

July 3, 2007

John Cleeves

Sumter National Forest

4931 Broad River Road

Columbia, SC 29212

Dear John Cleeves,

For the past 20 years, I have enjoyed fishing the Chattooga Cliffs section of the Chattooga River in Western North Carolina. This is the only creek/stream that is not open to boating in the area and thus allows me to enjoy the unique experience it has to offer. The Upper Chattooga is protected under the Wild & Scenic River Act and the Wilderness Act; the other streams cannot be protected against future boating demand. I am asking the USFS to protect the Upper Chattooga from overuse and safeguard this unique experience for future visitors.

In my 20+ years of fishing experience, I have seen the negative impact from the explosive growth of boating. Low-water boating on the Upper Chattooga will damage the riverbed scraping the moss off and leaving unsightly plastic marks all over the riverbed. The after effects of this activity is devastating to the scenic environment and the stream bed ecosystem. And MOST OF THE YEAR a boat/kayak/canoe could never travel or float the Upper Chattooga because of the low water levels and the terrain of the stream. Only during flood waters could it ever be floated, causing great risk to the boater.

The fish habitat will be diminished by floaters as well. Overhanging brush keeps the stream temperature down and supports wildlife. The downed trees in the stream support the fish habitat that is so important in the Upper Chattooga.

Paddlers often remove these downed trees for safety reasons. Both fishing and boating are incompatible in a stream such as this, and wilderness management is important for the habitat and boaters. Considering the number of streams already boater friendly, we should strive to keep the streams that are environmentally friendly to activities such as fishing and zoned for non-boaters!!

Please consider limiting the boating to zones that do not negatively impact the Chattooga Cliffs section of the Chattooga River.

Sincerely,

James E. Gunn
Associate Broker
Vista Commercial Mortgage
2002 Richard Jones Road, Suite A-203
Nashville, TN 37215

Wharton July 10, 2007

10 July 2007

I am a member of the Whiteside Cove Association that leases land on the headwaters of the Chattooga River near Cashiers, North Carolina. This pristine mountain stream has always had limited access due to the rugged geography of the region. Since the majority of the headwaters run through private property, the stream and watershed have retained its natural beauty and purity for decades despite local development. It is no surprise that the stream was designated a Wild and Scenic river back in the 1970's. At that time the USFS acknowledged that variable rainfall and the small size of the headwaters made the upper Chattooga non-navigable and, as such, would be considered private property. In the last thirty years little has changed on the Chattooga watershed. At some points the stream can be straddled with a foot on either side. In other areas it is wider and very shallow and can be easily forded. The river averages 10-12 feet and ranges from 2 to 50 feet wide during nominal water levels. We feel that the Army Corps of Engineers and The North Carolina Attorney General both were correct in their initial assessment that the Chattooga in North Carolina is non-navigable and as such should be designated private property.

With the continued growth and popularity of Western North Carolina it is no surprise that land use issues would arise. In recent months the American Whitewater Association has lobbied hard to gain access to the upper Chattooga by challenging the navigability and private property designation. Although our association has no problem with water craft

on the larger parts of the river downstream we feel strongly that access to the upper portion would destroy what the private landowners have been able to maintain for many years. That fact that the vast majority of the upper river could only be “paddled” during extremely high water or during “flood stage” reinforces our view that a change in designation is both unreasonable and irresponsible.

The Whiteside Cove Association strongly opposes any change in designation for the upper Chattooga and would encourage the USFS to clearly state that the upper river is not navigable and clearly delineate the private portions of the stream. We feel this will have limited impact on recreational “paddlers” and will in the long run benefit all users by helping to preserve the watershed which makes the entire Chattooga River so appealing to fisherman and paddlers alike.

William Wyant Wharton, III MD
Asheville, North Carolina

Webb July 10, 2007

The Chattooga Cliffs segment offers high quality fishing and ideal opportunities for solitude. I have enjoyed fishing, swimming and hiking this section for over 50 years. In all those years, I have never experienced a time when I could conceive that kayaking would be really doable mainly because of the topography and how the river entwines itself through a steep precipitous gorge from Grimshaw Bridge down to the Iron Bridge. It would require portaging in many places most of the time and would result in trespassing on private property. Frankly, I can't understand why the paddlers want this section, given all the waters available to them in Western North Carolina, other than they want it because they currently don't have it.

I have experienced kayakers and have rafted myself on the “Nantahala” and the lower part of the Chattooga as well as some rivers in Tennessee and find encounters with kayakers create direct conflict with my ability to fish and results in significant reduction in the angling experience. Boating should not be allowed to happen on the Chattooga North Fork for the anglers and would be impossible on the upper most sections. The lower part of the Chattooga, that is open to paddlers and kayakers, is bigger water and better conducive to their sport.

The Army Corps of Engineers and The North Carolina Attorney General both were correct in their assessment that the upper 1.7mile of the Chattooga is non-navigable. This small mountain stream does not have the capacity for floating during ordinary conditions.

The Values of swimming, wildlife viewing and angling must be protected on all segments of this stream.

Thank you for included my comments into the public record.

Respectfully,

Robert S Webb, Jr
30 White Oak Road
Asheville, NC 28803

Steadman July 10, 2007

To the NFS,

This is my input into the public hearing for the Headwaters of the Chattooga on July 10 as I am not able to attend in person.

I have read the entire USFS integrated report. I am very glad to see that what I suspected was the case is true. Boaters will use the area when the water is high. During these times, fisherman will not be interested in using the river. Boaters will not try to paddle when the water is low which happens to be the time that fisherman will be on the river. Conclusion: there is no problem will allowing boating as well as fishing on these upper reaches. There will be no need for arbitrary water level restrictions. Mother nature will regulate the river on its own. How appropriate for a wild and scenic river!

These findings provide data to support. Natural water flows will give the anglers 80% of the days per year for fishing. Only 20% of the days will be possible for boating. During these few days per year, anglers can still fish if they so desire. Anglers still have the lion share of useable days. No problem. No solution needed.

I think the USFS should include the entire upper chattooga reach including section 00.

Thank you,
Brent T. Steadman, MD PhD
1130 Folkstone Ridge Ln
Winston Salem, NC 27127

Rust Joan July 10, 2007

Chattooga River Uses

Dear Mr. Cleaves,

Swimmers are no less important then kayakers as users of the recreation experiences on the upper Chattooga. Swimming remains a very popular activity on these upper reaches with thousands of visitors every year.

Swimming and kayaking are so obviously not compatible on a small stream like the upper Chattooga.

This is verifiable at the popular Slide Rock and Bull Pen swim areas.

Kayaking remains well protected in the downstream portions of the Chattooga so protecting the activity of swimming should take precedent on these upper sections, and the policy should not be altered for the sole benefit of a single activity at the request of a single well funded lobby.

Additionally, the entire Chattooga watershed remains one of the largest wilderness areas intact east of the Mississippi River. It is one of the few places one can still experience solitude along a river edge without the disturbance of whitewater sports enthusiasts.

The upper Chattooga is the last boat-free creek offering the unique experience of tranquility especially during the higher water periods when other creeks are filled with kayaks.

The entire Chattooga should be managed so that a variety of different types of experiences remain available, including a day hiker's solitude in this wilderness setting.

Whitewater boating downriver and dispersed recreation on the upper Chattooga have encouraged diversity in offerings for thirty years, allowing both user groups to enjoy the river experience in their chosen fashion. Current policy encourages different activities which optimize everyone's experience.

Exclusive protection of whitewater enthusiast's values at the expense of opportunities for solitude and wilderness for all others should not set Chattooga management policy.

The impact to the riparian vegetation along the Chattooga is a concern as well. The integrated report noted considerable erosion problems from current users, of course additional use will on compound current problems. When all possible kayak skill levels are given access to the river, we can expect much more riparian impact. Vegetation around the waterfalls and large rapids is particularly sensitive to use and some of this vegetation is considered rare. Additionally an important refuge for waterfowl sensitive to continuous disturbances will be more greatly disturbed by increased usage by boaters. Water quality and wildlife habitat are of great import to me. Additional litter and human waste associated with any increase in access is of great concern to me.

I would like to see continued use restrictions on the Ellicott Rock section of the Wilderness to improve overall health of the ecosystem before it is too late to save.

I would like to see a limit to access in the backcountry. Barring this, any new use should exclude an increase of use on any portion of the Ellicott Wilderness.

Let me make it simple: please continue to keep the upper Chattooga closed to boating year round.

Joan M Rust
Sapphire, NC 28774

Rust Pimpaktra July 10, 2007

Dear Mr. Cleaves

Please include my response within the Public comments.

I: What values / issues of local or national significance are important for the Forest Service to consider?

-I think that is important for the Forest Service to consider that the entire Chattooga watershed remains one of the largest wilderness areas in the Eastern United States and it is something to be cherished and preserved as such. It is one of the few places where one can still experience solitude. It contains the few remaining trout streams in South Carolina. It would be a gross mistake to take it for granted: once it is gone it will never return to that state of purity which we all know and love. I think that history should show that despite certain faddish pressures of certain people today, our generation had the insight to see that this watershed is worth preserving. At this time, this means that is imperative that the Forest Service should curb the growth of whitewater activity that has become dominant so quickly on nearby creeks.

II How would the Chattooga be managed and what would it look like if you were managing it?

I would think it necessary that any policy for the Upper Chattooga should consider that appropriate activities take place on the corresponding appropriate sections of the river. Because of the unusual pristine nature of the Upper Chattooga, certain activities could not be allowed to dominate the corridor, so the entire river would have to be carefully managed to accommodate different activities in different ways. The zoning of the Upper portion to accommodate anglers and preserve the streams still accommodates boats by offering the larger and more appropriate 2/3rds of the river for their purposes.

Restricting boating from the North Fork would also preserve the habitat for the trout since the kayakers practice of removing large woody debris or overhanging rhododendron diminishes the overall trout habitat. Again limiting access ensures that the trout habitat is not spoiled so that "a few boaters" can spread out onto every creek in the area on higher water days.

III. What are the benefits (environmental, social, recreational, economic, etc.) that your vision provides?

Environmental: The Environmental benefits of preserving the pure, rare and unusual Upper Chattooga from inappropriate use cannot be overemphasized. Every visitor incrementally increases impact on a resource. Each activity impact is distinctive and alters the natural character of an area in a unique fashion. For hikers it is a trail system; for ATVs it is roads; for boaters it is turning a small mountain stream into a trail for travel, which, in the best case scenario, with the best intentions, still causes erosion and displaces wildlife.

Social: My vision ensures that all users can always find their own desired experience somewhere along the Chattooga, including during the moderately high water levels. A social boating and kayak-watching experience is currently available on the lower river. The unique upper river would be for serene activities with few disturbances.

With sixty percent of the river already open to boaters, saving a small area for others to also enjoy is an equitable policy.

Economic: The lower river and many local creeks already offer sufficient whitewater opportunity and the laws of diminishing returns would predict little return for yet another open creek. Conversely, the Upper Chattooga offers a unique opportunity for those who wish fewer encounters and to not become compulsory kayak spectators.

IV: What current or potential environmental effects are you concerned about?

An overall pristine Chattooga river are most important to me. The impact from unlimited recreation at Burrell's Ford, Earls Ford and Cashiers Slide Rock would only be compounded if even more access were allowed on the Chattooga. Imposing some limits now will insure the character of the river remains preserved for future generations.

One area of concern from me is the negative impact to the river from low-water boating. From my own experience low-water streams are no place for a kayak and gouges on the underside of my boat verify my concerns. Moss covered rocks and riparian wildflowers will not withstand repeated use by kayakers using the streambed as a thruway

V What changes would you recommend the Forest Service make in current management.

- I would like to see the US Forest Service help enforce overuse and fishing of the river.
- Continue to limit access to Mountain bikes, Boats, Horses and ATVs on the Upper Chattooga.
- Possibly establishing no-use zones in the Upper Ellicott wilderness to protect wildlife habitat.
- Possibly close some of the Wilderness area to allow for recovery of the resource.

VI What alternative or alternatives to current management would you recommend that, in your opinion, would best respond to all the various public interest while maintaining the outstandingly remarkable values of the Chattooga Wild & Scenic River?

The boating value is already well protected on the lower river and appears adequate given a boater's impact on other protected values.

One alternative worth considering would be opening the Chattooga below Burrell's ford during high water times. That would be the ONLY alternative worth considering.

Pimpaktra Rust
Cashiers NC

Rust Anissa July 10, 2007

Dear Mr. Cleeves,

Swimmers are no less important than kayakers when reviewing recreation on the upper Chattooga. Swimming remains a very popular activity on these upper reaches with thousands of visitors each year. Swimming and kayaking are simply not compatible on a small stream like the upper Chattooga. This is verifiable at the popular Slide Rock and Bull Pen swim areas. Kayaking remains well-protected in the downstream portions of the Chattooga. Protecting the activity of swimming should take precedent on these upper sections and management policy should not be altered for the benefit of a single activity.

Please continue to keep the upper Chattooga closed to boating if not year round, then at least during the entire swimming season.

Thank-you for your time. Please add my comments to the Public record

"Anissa Rust" <anissarust@hotmail.com>

Patton July 10, 2007

Dar Mr. Cleeves:

Thanks for the opportunity to express my opinion regarding opening the upper Chattooga River to boaters and kayakers.

Opening this area to boaters who simply ride down the river is an incredibly dangerous thing to allow. This pristine area will be deluged by humans, who, really, should never be there, except to leave footprints, as the original inhabitants of the area did. What is the point in opening up an area for people to boat down a river, with no purpose other than an exciting ride? The impact felt by opening the area will be just another disaster for the natural state of things.

There is less and less untainted forest service land every day. Economics cannot drive our eventual way to a greener society. Forty three years ago, the wilderness act of 1964 warned citizens that wilderness and solitude were becoming more and more scarce. Just imagine, with our hapless political leaders and their sneaky agendas, just how much less wilderness exists today. Degradation is inevitable, and recovery is extremely difficult, if not impossible.

Please consider this plea and keep me informed of your decision. I hope you will decide for a greener future and keep this region wild and scenic.

Sincerely,

Phillip B. Patton
214 Charlie Mountain road
Clayton GA 30525

McInnis July 10, 2007

July 10, 2007

Mr. John Cleeves
United States Forest Service

Dear Mr. Cleeves:

My name is Tom McInnis, I live in Clemson SC, and I chair the state Council for Trout Unlimited. I would like to address two points regarding the possible opening of the Chattooga headwaters to paddlers.

1. Importance of the headwaters to South Carolina trout anglers. South Carolina has many fewer miles of fishable trout water than our neighbors, Georgia and North Carolina. Of the rivers in South Carolina visited by the state's trout anglers, the Chattooga is the most important. Because of its size, anglers can disperse and experience solitude and the unique beauty of the area. Also, the chance of catching a trophy trout is higher. As shown by polls, South Carolina anglers, and in particular back country anglers, consider the Chattooga the premier trout fishery in the state. Back country anglers are overwhelmingly flyfishers who treasure solitude and wild trout, unlike front country anglers who primarily fish for stocked trout and are more tolerant of crowding. The reach above Burrell's Ford Bridge is a wild trout fishery. Based on anecdotal evidence, wild trout are more wary and susceptible to disturbance, and increasing the traffic on the river will invariably reduce the catch rate. If the headwaters are opened to paddlers, depending on the intensity of the activity, some or many of these backcountry anglers will be displaced. Unfortunately, there aren't any rivers in South Carolina that can substitute for the Chattooga. I would like to USFS to adopt a goal of "no displacement" of current users of the Chattooga headwaters in developing their new management plan.
2. Preservation of wildlife refuges and wilderness character. There are two reaches of the headwaters that currently have no road or trail access: the Rock Gorge area and the Bull Pen Road to Ellicott Rock reach. Opening these reaches to boating

essentially creates a new trail, a water trail, which will be a major change from the current conditions. Lacking sufficient study of the wildlife in these two areas, one would assume that the lessened chance of human contact as currently exists would make these areas important refuges for wildlife. Of most importance in my view is the Bull Pen Road to Ellicott Rock reach which lies in the designated wilderness section of the forest. In designated wilderness, protection of the wilderness character, plants and animals takes precedence over recreation. In order to protect the wilderness character of this area, minimizing human intrusion should be a priority. I would like to recommend that, in the absence of further studies on wildlife impacts, that the USFS adopt the policy of “no degradation” in these two reaches, and maintain the current trail-less state.

Tom McInnis, South Carolina Trout Unlimited

Jones July 10, 2007

Dear Mr. Cleaves:

I'm a member of the Whiteside Cove Association, which is a private club that leases land on the upper Chattooga River. I've had the pleasure of fishing, hiking and picnicking there with friends and family for almost 20 years. As I'm sure you know, it's a relatively unspoiled area that's perfect for fishing, but it's unsuitable for canoeing, kayaking or rafting because the water is too shallow, with too many logjams, waterfalls and other obstructions.

I'm writing to express my ongoing concern, indeed, dismay, that the Forest Service is continuing to allow itself to be manipulated into changing the long-standing - and sensible - management status of that portion of the river. I believe the actions of the Forest Service in this regard have resulted in wasting huge amounts of the taxpayers' money and the agency's time. This is especially frustrating since it appears to be driven by a small minority of outdoor users who already have abundant rights but want even more, regardless of the interests of other users and private property owners.

I plan to attend the public meeting to be hosted by the Forest Service on Saturday, July 14, 2007, in Walhalla, SC, and express my views on the issues presented, including my profound disappointment with the way the Forest Service has conducted itself in this process. Please include this message in the public record. Thank you.

Sincerely,

- Bob Jones
Dunwoody, GA

Hogan July 10, 2007

Dear Sir,

July 10, 2007

I would like to go on record as opposing the use of any water riding vessel on the Upper Chattooga River. It is my opinion that not only would it cause damage to pristine places for take out and put in that would otherwise not be disturbed, but more importantly I believe it could and

would open up many doors for disaster. Who would come to the aide of these people when accidents happen? How will this help be called for? It is my understanding that we have no USFS locally covering this area for accidents or injury. That the USFS has no budget in place to do it with. It is also my understanding that local EMS&R would be the response team 'IF' they could be notified. That's a big IF. From Highlands it would take at least an hour or more to reach any one in that section of the river by air, foot or boat. Will there be someone standing all along the rivers edge to monitar who is allowed to run it and who is not? How will they qualify? Will there be stations set up all along the river for emergancy stashes of transport eequipment etc.? Think about the impact of that. I have been hiking, swimming and camping on this part of the river regularly for 33 years. The Upper Chattooga is beautiful and dangerous, we can't change the danger of it, that is up to a much higher power. What we can do is insure the beauty of it and use disearnment on how it should be managed. Thank you.

Ellie Hogan
POB 412
Highlands, NC
828-200-0488

Hayes July 10, 2007

The Chattooga Cliffs portion of the Chattooga River offers very high quality fishing for anglers and also gives excellent opportunities for solitude. Personally, I have enjoyed fishing and hiking this section for a number of years. In my time on the river, I yet to observe a day that the water flow was too high for angling, although there are many days when the water is too low for angling.

I have attempted to share a fishing experience with kayakers on other rivers such as the Davidson and the Nantahala. I have found that encounters with kayakers create direct conflict with my ability to fish and results in significant reduction in the angling experience. I feel that boating should not be allowed on the north fork of the Chattooga and probably would be impossible on most of the upper most sections.

The Army Corps of Engineers and The North Carolina Attorney General both were correct in their assessment that the upper 1.7 miles of the Chattooga is non-navigable. This small mountain stream does not have the capacity for floating during ordinary conditions.

The angling and overall wild life experience must be protected on all segments of this stream.

Thank you for including my comments into the public record.

"Hayes, David L. - Asheville, NC"

Gatins July 10, 2007

July 10, 2007

Dr. Jerome A. Thomas
Supervisor, Sumter National Forest
USDA Forest Service
ATTN: John Cleeves, Chattooga Project Coordinator
4391 Broad River Road
Columbia, South Carolina 29212-3530

Dear Dr. Thomas,

Georgia Forest Watch appreciates this opportunity to formally comment on the USDA Forest Service's Upper Chattooga (modified) Visitor Use Capacity Analysis and to supplement the public guidance and input you seek for this effort.

As you know, Georgia Forest Watch is a not-for-profit forest conservation organization dedicated to preserving and protecting the wild values of national forestlands in Georgia, and, by extension, the Wild and Scenic Chattooga River corridor that demarks the state's easternmost boundaries in this region.

Georgia Forest Watch volunteers, advisors, district leaders and/or board members have attended every public forum and meeting held in conjunction with the Sumter National Forest's Chattooga boating study, as well as supplemental meetings held with the Friends of the Upper Chattooga organization, and closely analyzed the huge cascade of words and paperwork the Forest Service and its consultants have showered on the public since beginning this exercise. We also previously have filed numerous written statements regarding this study.

Frankly, though, all that past is prologue to the real meat of the situation – which is to see what the Forest Service actually will propose regarding the huge push for unrestricted boating on the nearly pristine, 21 miles of the North Fork of the Chattooga. We do look forward to seeing the agency finally put its cards on the table – you've been playing all this very close to the vest so far -- and commenting on your proposals and alternatives thereafter.

But we can tell you of one sure thing even before the Forest Service finally comes out with its intentions: Georgia ForestWatch believes the agency made the right decision 31 years ago to “zone” all boats and horses and bikes and ATVs out of the Upper Chattooga and nearby corridor. It is a decision that has stood the test of three decades – in preserving the wild resources of this area for this and future generations; in limiting “user conflicts;” in protecting any number of threatened and endangered species

and habitats; in maintaining water quality and aquatic habitat for trout, fish and other aquatic species; in safeguarding a variety of historical and archeological sites, and, perhaps most of all, in providing the American public a refuge and an experience that it can hardly duplicate anywhere on the east coast of the United States. This is a very good thing that should be stretched out into the future, we believe.

Georgia ForestWatch thus urges the USDA Forest Service to vigorously defend your current management of this part of the river – both in the upcoming “standards workshop” on July 14, and in the subsequent plans that you must bring forward under the National Environmental Policy Act.

It is time for the agency to stick to its guns. And as you do so, we ask the Forest Service to closely consider and analyze the following significant issues, many of which have been given short shrift in the analysis made public so far:

- 1) The USDA Forest Service must analyze the conditions and effects of boating on the lower 36 miles of the Chattooga River in order to properly understand and analyze what might happen on the Upper Chattooga.
- 2) The agency must conduct new biological and archeological surveys of the 21 miles of the Upper Chattooga and its tributaries, provide the public the results of the findings and disclose how it intends to protect these resources.
- 3) When it comes to pre-European settlement archeological resources, the Forest Service must confer with Native American tribes and groups to ascertain proper treatment of sensitive sites.
- 4) The agency, *a priori*, must work to fix all the “bio-physical” problems identified in the Ellicott Rock Wilderness and adjacent forestlands that are being degraded by overuse, before it even considers the notion of boats, kayaks, tubes, canoes or rafts on this part of the river and its tributaries. The notion of “adaptive management” demands no less.
- 5) The Forest Service can and should consider amendment of the current Chattahoochee, Sumter and Nantahala forest management plans to better protect the Upper Chattooga – including possible recommendations to creatively expand the Ellicott Rock Wilderness, perhaps from Chattooga Cliffs all the way down to Reed Creek, or recommending realignment of the wild, scenic and recreation sections of the Upper Chattooga. The agency can and should reconsider its prior decision to keep the bridges on Bull Pen and Burrell’s Ford roads open.
- 6) The Forest Service must commit to providing the necessary resources, and the budget to support them, to provide proper

law enforcement on the Upper Chattooga (including all three states and all three national forests involved.)

- 7) The agency, as part of its upcoming scoping notices, must inform the American public whether it believes the Upper Chattooga is legally navigable. If it's not, the case is closed.
- 8) The agency must clearly promulgate a rule that **no** large woody debris shall ever be removed from the Upper Chattooga and its tributaries – just as is done for the Upper Rogue and Metolius rivers in Oregon.
- 9) A further word about the tributaries: The Forest Service should reconsider the current management rules that apparently permit boating on the Upper Chattooga's tributaries, particularly if the north Fork remains closed.
- 10) The agency must consider the current experiences and safety of hunters, hikers, anglers, naturalists, photographers, picnickers, swimmers, bird watchers, campers, amateur archeologists and just plain old citizens out for a family outing in the Upper Chattooga – and how those might be degraded by the vast numbers of boaters – and the crowds that come with them -- who likely would come to the upper reaches if the agency opened it up to unrestricted boating.
- 11) The agency must consider all reasonable, long-term cumulative effects that would arise if boating were allowed on the Upper Chattooga and its tributaries – especially the likely push you will receive from the commercial river outfitters to provide their clients access to this part of the river. (Experience on the Lower Chattooga clearly shows the Forest Service has little stomach for limiting the reach of the licensed outfitters – particularly when they arrive with the heady lure of ready cash and user fees for a cash-strapped federal agency.)
- 12) The Forest Service must confer with other federal agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (regarding preservation of habitat for threatened and endangered species such as the mountain lion,) and the National Park Service (whose management of whitewater streams and rivers in Yellowstone National Park will come under attack if boating is allowed here.)
- 13) The Forest Service should not countenance the vast increase in vehicles and visitors that will occur if boating is allowed on this stretch of river. (This increase is well predicted in the agency's recent "integrated analysis" of Capacity and Conflict on the Upper Chattooga River of June 2007, which also ably describes that the Upper Chattooga, in many regards, has reached its "carrying capacity.")
- 14) That same report documents well how boaters on the Upper Chattooga would be spooking fish and bothering backcountry

anglers in the same stretches of river, a situation that also must be addressed in the scoping notice.

- 15) Finally, for every proposal and alternative brought forward in the scoping notice, the Forest Service must identify how much each would cost the public and how the federal government intends to pay for them – and whether, in fact, the agency can afford them.

We respectfully ask that such details be given close attention as the Forest Service promulgates its formal scoping notice for the Upper Chattooga project. Please feel free to call if you have any questions. Please forward any further correspondence or questions regarding this matter to me at these coordinates: 2489 Glade Road, Clayton, Georgia, 30525, Telephone: 706.782.9944. E-mail: jgatins@alltel.net

Sincerely,

Joseph Gatins
Co-district leader
Georgia ForestWatch

C: Friends of the Upper Chattooga
Various U.S. Forest Service officials
News media

Gatins July 10, 2007

**2489 Glade Road
Clayton, Georgia 30525**

Fon: 706/782-9944 Fax: 706/782-1359

e-mail: jgatins@alltel.net

July 10, 2007

Dr. Jerome A. Thomas
Supervisor, Sumter National Forest
USDA Forest Service
ATTN: John Cleaves, Chattooga Project Coordinator

4391 Broad River Road
Columbia, South Carolina 29212

Dr. Thomas,

My name is Joe Gatins. I am a full-time resident of Rabun County, Georgia, and its unincorporated Satolah community – adjacent to the Wild and Scenic Chattooga River corridor.

I stand before you today to make a personal plea to urge the U.S. government to stick to its guns – and keep the 21 miles of the Upper Chattooga free of all boats, kayaks, tubes, canoes, or any other watercraft -- just as the U.S. Forest Service has kept it free of 4-wheelers, ATVs, ORVs, pack horses, covered wagons, mountain bikes and dirt bikes for the past 31 years.

Three decades of this management for pedestrian traffic only prove to me that you made the right decision then, and that you should make the right decision today.

I do challenge you to stand up to the pressure the Forest Service is getting from Washington on down to do just the opposite. You represent, after all, the U.S. government, which is supposed to represent *all* American citizens. It also merits repeating that you are legally bound under federal law to pay special attention to the needs of the wild, natural resource that you successfully have protected since the mid-1970s.

I take this personally, because for many years I served the Forest Service as a volunteer trail maintainer in the corridor. Countless hours and several swing blades and clippers later, I have grown to appreciate the truly wild nature of this section of river. I also have traversed and visited any number of old home sites and archeological sites in these areas.

These forays into these public forests provide an experience basically unparalleled in the southeast – remote and wild, and one that the public should have a continuing right to experience in untrammled fashion in the Southern Appalachians.

I also believe that there is a time and place for different wild and scenic experiences, and I tested the waters, so to speak, this past Memorial Day weekend to gauge just how different those experiences can be.

Take the scene at Bull Sluice on the Lower Chattooga, for example, and by way of contrast, the very different experience found at the confluence of Norton Mill Creek and the North Fork. This truly was the difference

between being part of the madding crowd, on the one hand, and being far from it, on the other.

There were more than 50 vehicles and motorcycles in the Forest Service parking lot at Bull Sluice that day, and a multitude of kayakers, rafters, swimmers and just plain old gawkers down at the river, including babies that had been rolled down to the Chattooga in their playpens along the paved trail that you provide the public at this location. It was loud, boisterous and “jangly.”

That same weekend, I found myself in the only vehicle parked at the “County Line Road” that leads down 1.7 miles to Norton Mill Creek. I was the only hiker on that trail and essentially had the whole forest to myself, save for a pileated woodpecker knock-knocking on a dead hemlock. The only humans I saw all day were a couple and their two small children, who were being introduced to the joys of the Chattooga River trail in these parts. It was mostly silent and very peaceful, providing a feeling of being at one with nature and the real grassroots of this mountainous forestland.

I firmly believe this latter experience will no longer exist if whitewater boaters and their extreme sport and their entourage are allowed to use the same part of the river. The boaters have access to many numerous alternative waterways already. And you have a lot of work to do addressing the resource damage already occurring on this part of the Upper Chattooga.

So, I challenge you to keep your eyes on the truly meaningful issues at hand -- and in meaningful fashion protect the Upper Chattooga from further resource damage, from user conflicts, from increased camping and campfires and trash, from creation of portage trails, from trampling of vegetation, from increased bank erosion and further loss of that most rare commodity in 21st Century America – an outstandingly remarkable value known as true solitude.

Thank you for your time.

I also am closely affiliated with Georgia ForestWatch, the not-for-profit forest conservation group, and ask that the organization’s written comments also be made part of this hearing record.

Sincerely,

Joseph Gatins

Dyarw July 10, 2007

John,

I am not able to attend the meeting . The meeting is not at an appropriate time for the general public to make any comments, they are working on their jobs at this time. The river above highway 28 should not be opened to boaters. The boaters have sections 2,3,and 4 to boat on already. The water levels on the section above28 bridge are very low during the summer and fall, the boater would drag the bottom doing a tremendous damage to the bottom. This damage would effect all the work the State has done to build up this fishery. I have run the river in rafts and know the damage they can do. We need to keep a quite place to fish, hike,and camp without the boaters. Thanks for accepting my comments. I hope they help. Many others feel the same.

dyarw@bellsouth.net

Van Lear July 10, 2007

STATEMENT ON CHATTOOGA RIVER BOATING POLICY (7/10/07)

David H. Van Lear (Professor Emeritus, retired, Clemson University)

My name is David Van Lear. I am a retired forestry professor from Clemson University. I appreciate the opportunity to make a statement about management of the upper Chattooga River.

The Chattooga River is indeed a national treasure. For over 30 years, it has been zoned to separate conflicting uses and, from the perspective of most users, this management strategy has worked exceedingly well. On the river above the Highway 28 Bridge, anglers, hikers, bird watchers, naturalists, and others have the rare opportunity to enjoy a true backcountry experience without interruption by enthusiastic flotillas of boaters. On the lower river boaters enjoy the wild whitewater experience without interference from wading anglers.

In my opinion, it would be foolish for the Forest Service to change a successful management strategy that is working very well? Management of our national forests over the past 100 years has evolved through a number of stages – from protection to multiple-use to ecosystem management to social forestry at the present time. The common denominator for all these stages is that the influence of the public has increased with passing time. While these changes have generally been beneficial, one drawback, in my opinion, is now the wheel that squeaks loudest gets the grease.

Is that any way to manage a national treasure like the Chattooga River? Shouldn't the inherent value of a natural resource, i.e., its natural beauty, its biodiversity, its wildness, be what is protected by the stewards of the public's resources? Haven't we learned

anything in the decades since Walt Kelly's cartoon character Pogo uttered those immortal words, "We have met the enemy and they is us." In other words, too many of us in the rather confined, wild, and still natural corridor of the upper Chattooga River will ultimately destroy that which makes the place a wild and scenic river.

As we move into the 21st century, one thing is certain. The places one can go to enjoy the beauty and solitude of a relatively large, wild, and undammed river in the eastern United States, whether you are fishing or not, are becoming harder and harder to find. The upper Chattooga River is such a place, and as such would become even more valuable in the future. Let's save it to the degree possible by continuing to manage it responsibly as a zoned resource where boating is prohibited above the Highway 28 Bridge.

I am writing to oppose the proposal to allow kayaking on the the Chattooga Cliffs segment. This portion offers high quality fishing and ideal opportunities for solitude and is non-navigable. Boating would only ruin these while providing no real valuable kayaking experience. I have enjoyed fishing, swimming and hiking this section for 20 years. I have never experienced a day that the water flow was too high for angling, although there are many days when the water is too low for angling.

I have experienced kayakers on the Nantahala River and find encounters with kayakers create direct conflict with my ability to fish and results in significant reduction in the angling experience. Boating should not be allowed to happen on the Chattooga North Fork for the anglers and indeed would be impossible on the upper most sections.

The Army Corps of Engineers and The North Carolina Attorney General both were correct in their assessment that the upper 1.7 miles of the Chattooga is non-navigable. This small mountain stream does not have the capacity for floating during ordinary conditions.

Thank you for included my comments into the public record.

Sincerely,

Jim Cummings

Chase July 10, 2007

Here is my letter following yesterday's public hearing in Walhalla, SC.

Amy R. Chase
P. O. Box 2688
Cashiers, NC 28717

I am a resident of Whiteside Cove who has been following the controversy over opening the upper Chattooga to boating since the meeting held with the Forest Service in Highlands on July 27, 2006.

At that meeting, I came away angry that the controversy was being presented as a fight between kayakers and anglers. Opening the upper Chattooga to boats affects the entire community of users, and all users should have equal input.

The dangers which boats present to swimmers at Slide Rock and Bull Pen cannot be overstated. It's impossible to quickly stop a boat heading downstream over fast running rapids. So what happens when you suddenly see a swimming or snorkeling child who doesn't see you and who is immediately in front of you? As a swimmer, especially as an unaware young child, it is impossible to move quickly out of the way. I sure don't want my grandchildren slammed by a novice boater taking a "blind drop" into an unseen pool below. They and all children shouldn't even be at risk for such an event.

Swimming takes place all summer from May through September at all water levels since swimming is temperature dependent not flow level dependent. The fun of Slide Rock depends on enough water to move a sliding child or adult forward over the rocks into the pool below. The swimmer's bottom is rather like a weighted kayak. Lots of fun and only available in mountain streams. My grandchildren and all children visiting the Chattooga should be able to enjoy sliding risk free.

Restrictions on boating throughout the summer at least from May through September would ensure that boats going over rapids would not collide with children splashing below in pools like those at Bull Pen. Seasonal restrictions would protect the experience for the majority as represented by the swimmers and avoid undue hazard for the many families with children who currently use the river.

These local swimming holes are already too congested. There are no adequate parking areas so children get in and out of cars right on the road. One of these days a kid will be hit by a passing car. There are no provisions for refuse. The areas need garbage pails and seasonal porta-loos so that the swimming holes, the river, and its banks are clean and sanitary. Perhaps the Forest Service should take care of the current problems caused by congestion before it considers adding to the congestion by bringing in the boaters who will use the bridges at Bull Pen and Slide Rock as entry points on to the river.

Public safety issues on the river extend beyond collisions between boats and swimming children. Kayaking over stretches of Level 5 rapids and waterfalls is high risk sport. Accidents will require the assistance of the local search and rescue teams. Boaters and swimmers will need rescue putting the teams at risk and imposing expense on all of us in Jackson County. This risk and expense to satisfy the demand of a small group within a specialist organization is unnecessary and unfair to the majority. Forest Service resources are better used by caring for the existing environment of the upper

Chattooga.

To put this risk and expense into perspective, twenty-four (24) out of the thirty-nine (39) or over 60% of fatalities on the Chattooga since 1970 have been related to whitewater boating. Given that the section 00 of the Chattooga is irresistibly challenging for boaters to navigate, opening this section would lead to accidents in areas where the river is narrow and descent steep.

The Forest Service has already limited boat use in swimming areas in the Pisgah National Forest. It should do the same in the Nantahala. By not seriously considering the swimmers needs and use of the Chattooga, the US Forest Service cannot fully address the impact which boating will have on the future safety of swimmers. Even one child's death from a collision with a boat is one too many.

Brooks July 10, 2007

Dear Mr. Cleeves:

The Chattooga Cliffs segment offers high quality fishing and ideal opportunities for solitude. I have enjoyed fishing, swimming and hiking this section for the last four or five years. I have never experienced a day that the water flow was too high for angling, although there are many days when the water is too low for angling. I have experienced kayakers on the "Davidson/North Fork Broad/Nantahala" and find encounters with kayakers create direct conflict with my ability to fish and results in significant reduction in the angling experience. Boating should not be allowed to happen on the Chattooga North Fork for the anglers and would be impossible on the upper most sections. The Army Corps of Engineers and The North Carolina Attorney General both were correct in their assessment that the upper 1.7 miles of the Chattooga is non-navigable. This small mountain stream does not have the capacity for floating during ordinary conditions. The Values of swimming, wildlife viewing and angling must be protected on all segments of this stream.

Thank you for included my comments into the public record.

Mark C. Brooks, P.E.

Brady July 10, 2007

Dear Mr. Cleeves,

I am against the Whitewater Association's attempt to open the Upper Chattoga for unlimited access for boaters. The solitude and pureness of nature is truly wonderful and I believe it would be ruined by granting the boaters unlimited access. Kayaks and canoes damage ecosystems and scare wildlife and fish. As we know scientifically, wildlife are severely impacted by the presence of humans and boaters are a loud, large footprint leaving group. They already have access to a better portion of the river downstream and we have seen what they do to the area. Hiking and swimming that is now allowed in the area would be greatly destroyed by the unlimited access by the boaters. Riparian vegetation would receive too much damage and many have noted erosion problems with the very limited use it withstands now. With people hauling gear and boats through the trails, we would see a huge negative difference in the health of the ecosystem.

The boaters have their place lower down where it is more appropriate. I wish to keep the uses as appropriate and as the same as now, as low impact as possible. Limit people the same as it is now. Change is not always good and we know that the change the boaters want will change this area forever. People are just now beginning to understand the damage that plastic can do to our health and I am troubled by the probable damage that that much plastic in the ecosystem would have. Human waste is another problem. There are no controls in the wilderness for people who would use the area. They should never go near a river and yet, they will. What is that going to do to the water downstream and to the wildlife and flora in the area? Possible contaminants besides the obvious like e-coli are hormones from birth control pills, anti-depressants, and other medications we would prosecute if someone dumped along the river but look the other way as they would be excreted by humans.

I would like to see over all access limited in the back country not increased by adding a potentially extremely damaging new user to the mix. Any new use should NOT include use on any portion of the Ellicott Wilderness.

Thank you for your time on this issue!
Tabitha R. Bradley
260 Rainy Knobs Rd.
Sapphire, NC 28774

**"Will Bradley" <willbradley@gmail.com>
07/12/2007 02:26 PM**

Mr. Cleaves,

I am a swimmer and a hiker of the Cashiers, NC area. The upper Chattooga River is a wilderness area protected and preserved for enthusiasts like myself to enjoy. I am concerned the area being opened for public use will destroy the fragile habitat and there will be one less place remaining to the large portion of the population that supports protecting the land and saving sections for future generations. I also enjoy boating. There are plenty of places available to me as a boater that there is no need to take up sections of the river set aside for people to fish, hike and swim in peace.

Since the 1970's the Upper Chattooga River has been under the protection of the Forest Service as well as that of the Cashiers, NC angling association. With these caretakers, the area has flourished as the beautiful and scenic area it is today. It is healthy and well maintained. The boaters have a full 96% of the river, while this small 4% is left protected from heavy use. This 4% is restocked and maintained in a pristine way and that is why it has remained as beautiful as it is today. If it is opened to boaters how long with the area maintain this beauty. What are the chances that whitewater enthusiasts will replenish stream health? I think small to none, their interest in stream health is limited. If the boaters come in, anglers may not stay to replenish the river. In many ways, the anglers are free labor for the preservation of the land. Free stewards of land use are not easy to come by, let these people work with your blessing.

Below Highway 28 the effects of the overuse by boaters is all too evident. If anything, the boating on the lower Chattooga should be restricted and allow for the river to replenish itself and regain its natural beauty. I suggest a limitation for river replenishment. Leave it untouched for a year and monitor its regrowth. Open it to people willing to clean up the river and keep it sanitary not to people who only want it for floating a piece of plastic.

Thank you for your time,
William Bradley and my son, Jacob Bradley (5 months old)

<simwelter@charter.net>
07/12/2007 05:37 PM

Dear Mr. Cleeves,

I attended the public hearing in Walhalla, SC this past Tuesday afternoon regarding the status of the ban on boating the upper Chattooga River, designated Wild and Scenic.

Numerous American Whitewater members and other kayaking enthusiasts noted what little impact they would make on the wild and scenic corridor. That the number of kayakers would be minimal due to the difficulty of that section, that only expert boaters would be able to paddle it. They pointed out that there would only be a handful of days out of the year that it would even be boatable due to the water levels.

If so few boaters will be able to paddle it, and so few days of that section will even be passable for a kayak, it begs the question: Why do they care so much about having that section open?

The answer is simple. It isn't access to the upper Chattooga that they care about. It is the precedent that will be set if the Forest Service lifts the ban on boats. A precedent they sorely want and desperately need to give them a foothold to get into Yellowstone. If they can strong arm the Forest Service into allowing boats on Chattooga's Wild and Scenic section, then they have a better chance of doing the same in Yellowstone.

They merely want the Chattooga as a stepping stone and have no regard whatsoever for those it will impact. Namely, the local residents, hikers, bird watchers, naturalists, and anglers who cherish that section for what it is - a beautiful, natural, virtually unspoiled area. I myself drive 2 hours in one direction for the solitude and serenity it offers.

Please do not bow to the wishes of American Whitewater. Uphold the ban on boats in the upper Chattooga Wild and Scenic section. Let the precedent that is set be one that continues to protect natural areas from further encroachment. We have precious few left of them as it is.

Thank you for your kind attention,
Simons B. Welter
Spartanburg, SC

**"John Fleming" <jfleming@mwbavl.com>
07/17/2007 12:03 PM**

Ladies and gentlemen:

The Chattooga Cliffs segment offers high quality fishing and ideal opportunities for solitude. I have enjoyed Fishing, swimming and hiking this section for over 10 years. I have never experienced a day that the water flow was too high for angling, although there are many days when the water is too low for angling.

I have experienced kayakers on the "Davidson/North Fork Broad/Nanahala" and find encounters with kayakers create direct conflict with my ability to fish and results in significant reduction in the angling experience. Boating should not be allowed to happen on the Chattooga North Fork for the anglers and would be impossible on the upper most sections.

The Army Corps of Engineers and The North Carolina Attorney General both were correct in their assessment that the upper 1.7 miles of the Chattooga is non-navigable. This small mountain stream does not have the capacity for floating during ordinary conditions.

The Values of swimming, wildlife viewing and angling must be protected on all segments of this stream.

Thank you for included my comments into the public record.

John N. Fleming
Asheville, NC

Friends of the Upper Chattooga
2368 Pinnacle Drive
Clayton, Georgia 30525

**Joseph Gatins <jgatins@alltel.net>
07/28/2007 07:37 AM**

July 28, 2007

Jerome Thomas, Supervisor
USDA Forest Service, Sumter National Forest
Attn: John Cleaves
4391 Broad River Road
Columbia, South Carolina 29212-3530

RE: Upper Chattooga River Visitor Capacity Analysis Scoping Notice

Dear Supervisor Thomas,

Friends of the Upper Chattooga individually and collectively urge the USDA Forest Service to give particular attention to the list of factors below as your team develops the upcoming scoping notice and alternatives for management of the North Fork of the Chattooga River and all its tributaries. These factors are all based on common sense, existing Forest Service studies and rules and/or federal law.

All suggest strongly that the Forest Service must, as a priority over all else, protect the outstandingly remarkable values and wild, natural resource that make the Ellicott Rock Wilderness and the Wild and Scenic Chattooga the very special places that they are today and should be for future generations.

The list:

- Preserving wilderness resources. "Where a choice must be made between wilderness values and visitor or any other activity, preserving the wilderness resource is the overriding value. Economy, convenience, commercial value, and comfort are not standards of management or use of wilderness." Forest Service Manual 2320.6
- Wilderness values must dominate. "Where there are alternatives among management decisions, wilderness values shall dominate over all other considerations." Forest Service Manual 2320.3
- Primary emphasis. "... primary emphasis shall be given to protecting its aesthetic, scenic, historic, archaeological, and scientific features." Wild and Scenic River Act, Section 10(a)
- Primitive experience over recreation demand. Future public demand in the Chattooga corridor could reach saturation and cause degradation of the experience, according to the 1971 study of Wild and Scenic Chattooga area. The report recommends resource development should be guided by preserving the primitive experience as a priority over demand.

- Wild river segments. The wild segments of the Chattooga River are the most primitive and remote, and whose management “is focused on protecting the outstandingly remarkable values of the river and preserving the natural environment and natural processes from human influences.” Land and Resource Management Plan for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests, page 3-26.
- Little or no human intervention. As for the portion of the river that transects the Ellicott Rock Wilderness, note that Forest Service management emphasis “is to allow ecological and biological processes to progress naturally with little to no human influence or intervention, except the minimum impacts made by those who seek the wilderness as a special place that offers opportunities to experience solitude.” Land and Resource Management Plan for Sumter National Forest, page 3-1.
- Large Woody Debris. It is Forest Service management policy to recruit accumulation of Large Woody Debris to the creeks and rivers that it manages, with the desired condition being approximately 200 pieces of such debris per stream mile, according to the Sumter’s management plan (page 3-41,) and the June, 2007, integrated analysis of Capacity and Conflict on the Upper Chattooga River (page 56.) By contrast, both the integrated report and experience on the ground after Hurricane Opal suggest that boaters without permission routinely cut and remove such debris with chainsaws.
- Unrestricted boating would overwhelm the resource. The Integrated Report (Whitaker, 2007,) notes boating could occur on the North Fork as low as the 1.8-foot level. The gauge was recorded as being over 1.8 feet for 79 percent of the time during the period 2003-2005 (or 862 days.) For 386 consecutive days (from 9/7/2004 until 9/28/2005,) there were only four days with levels under 1.8.
- Boating displaces other river visitors. Boating on the lower 36 miles of the Chattooga, which provides for unlimited private boating and regulated commercial boating, has clearly displaced other visitors wishing to avoid user conflicts and/or interference while seeking solitude and quietness. (See pages 15 and 69 of the Integrated Report.)
- The public overwhelmingly supports zoning of the North Fork. The Sumter National Forest has received 423 personal comments in connection with the ongoing analysis – 60 percent of which were not in favor of unrestricted boating on the Upper Chattooga. In the case of the Forest Service public hearing held in Walhalla, S.C., on July 10, 35 of the 56 speakers (almost two-thirds) came out against unrestricted boating.
- Common sense should prevail. Zoning of conflicting activities is good stewardship, not discrimination. Stewardship encompasses far more than picking up litter. It includes the protection of the aesthetic values of natural resources such as remoteness and wildness, the proper regard for the rights of others to solitude, and the responsibility of preserving these values intact for future generations.
- If permitted and established, boating will, most likely and

predictably, overwhelm the Upper Chattooga just as it has the lower river as evidenced above. Whitewater boating, or “creeking,” is an extreme challenge sport rapidly growing in popularity (see page 22 of the Whitaker report.) If boating is permitted and established on the Upper Chattooga, degradation of both environmental resource and social conditions will inevitably occur, and it will be virtually impossible for the Forest Service to ever reverse course and revert to current management.

•Direct, indirect and cumulative effects. Forest Service procedures, (from the Forest Service Manual, 2320.3,) require the agency to “gather necessary information and carry out research programs in a manner that is compatible with the preservation of the wilderness environment.” This requirement leads to multiple questions. Among them: Has the Forest Service gauged the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of boating on riverbanks, flora and fauna of the Upper Chattooga? Have the negative impacts been studied. Have new biological surveys been accomplished?

Please let us know if there are any questions. We look forward to seeing the scoping notice, and ask that you note Friends of the Upper Chattooga have picked up several new signatories – testament to the widespread interest in this issue.

Sincerely,

Michael “Squeak” Smith
Southeast Region Vice-President and Member of the Board of Trustees,
Trout Unlimited
By JG, with express permission

Butch Clay
Mountain Rest, S.C.
By JG, with express permission

Joseph Gatins
Co-District Leader
Georgia ForestWatch

Doug Adams,
Newsletter Editor, Rabun Chapter, Trout Unlimited
By JG, with express permission

Charlie Breithaupt,
Chairman, Georgia Council of Trout Unlimited
By JG, with express permission

Tom McInnis,
Chairman, South Carolina Council of Trout Unlimited
By JG, with express permission

Art Shick,
South Carolina Trout Unlimited & NLC Representative
By JG, with express permission

Buzz Williams,
Executive Director, Chattooga Conservancy
By JG, with express permission

David Bates,
Executive Director, Jackson-Macon Conservation Alliance
By JG, with express permission

Wyatt Stevens and Mike Bamford
for the Whiteside Cove Association
By JG, with express permission

George Nickas
Wilderness Watch
By JG, with express permission

Brent Martin
The Wilderness Society
By JG, with express permission

John Benbow,
President, North Carolina Wildlife Federation
By JG, with express permission

Jerry McCollum
Georgia Wildlife Federation
By JG, with express permission