

10/03/2007

Francis Marion & Sumter National Forests,

My name is David and I'm currently a senior, studying Recreation Parks and Tourism at West Virginia University in Morgantown, West Virginia. I focus my studying on outdoor experiential education.

I recently read in an article that the right for boaters to kayak in a wilderness area was being threatened by the United States Forest Service. In the article, it accuses kayakers of spreading trash in the areas and being hazardous to other people recreating in these wilderness areas. As I was reading the article, I couldn't help but think of the vast number of individuals in the Morgantown boating community that is passionate about the outdoors and uses strict leave-no-trace practices whenever recreating outside, especially in wilderness settings.

Granted, I believe that every wilderness area has a certain capacity and when that capacity exceeds, the environment is strongly impacted in a negative way. However, I disagree that the solution to this issue is to ban kayakers the access into these wilderness areas. Whitewater boating has been around for a long time and shouldn't be considered as having more of an impact on a wilderness environment than hikers, campers, or swimmers.

The USFS should determine a certain capacity for a wilderness area and monitor that number. If the number should be met, all recreationists (not just kayakers) should be denied access to the area.

In my humble opinion, I don't believe that whitewater kayakers are the primary reason for impacted areas in wilderness areas. At least in this community, boaters respect the wilderness and frown upon littering and poor leave-no-trace practices. In this region of the country, uneducated hikers and fishermen are more likely to cause negative impacts on the land than whitewater kayakers. This issue shouldn't be addressed to whitewater boaters, but a recreation community as a whole.

Thank you for your time in reading this letter. I hope that this decision to ban kayakers from these wilderness areas can be reconsidered and looked at from other perspectives.

Sincerely,



David Neumann

Rec'd USFS 10-12-07

16 October 2007

2226 S. Dalleryn Cir

Charn. SC 29414

Mr. John Clava
Forest Service, USOA
4431 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29212

Dear Mr. Clava,

This letter is in response to the revised alternatives for use of the Chattooga River.

As in previous communications, the preservation of the wild and scenic aspects of the river are of primary concern with me. To this end, I would like to see new standards limiting trailheads, trails and especially campsites within the river corridor. As a trout fisherman, I am quite concerned regarding encounters with other users of the river. Limiting such encounters is important to me. In fact, I already do so by restricting my use of the river to Monday through Thursday.

In regards to the boating issue, I would oppose new boating opportunities above the Rt 28 bridge. The "Delayed Harvest" area is a unique resource. Boating and fly fishing are both treasured, presenting smelly opportunities for inappropriate encounters between the two groups. No boating takes care of this problem.

In summary, I can live with numbers 1, 3 and 4 alternatives of the revised version of same. Number two is unacceptable to me due to the loss of the small parking area at the Rte 28 Bridge. Number four is marginally acceptable due to the restriction on boating to $\frac{1}{4}$ mile above Burrella Ford Bridge. I do feel, however, that this restriction would be violated by boaters once on the river.

Finally, after reading the comments posted on the P.S. website, I would stress the fact that most fishermen who use the D.H. section of the river are members of Trout Unlimited. The T.U. members I know profess a particular ethic and love of clean, uncluttered waterways. They avoid one another, respecting the others' space and are vehemently against litter of all forms and origin.

Sincerely
Philip G. Smith
Member Saluda River Chapter
Trout Unlimited

Mr. John Dorney - Supervisor
4931 Broad River Road
Columbia, S.C. 29219

11-02-2007

Dear Mr. Dorney:

The Chattooga River is a beautiful free flowing river that runs for 57 miles through three states starting in the mountains of North Carolina.

The "National Wild and Scenic River System" act passed by the U.S. Congress in October of 1968, (Public Law 90-542) governs this river.

Since 1976 the upper section has been closed to water craft by the U.S. Forest Service who has jurisdiction over the river and surrounding areas.

In 2005 American Whitewater filed an appeal that subsequently has led to ongoing approaches and studies as to the opening or closing in whole or in part of the upper river to boating.

This basically was a conflict between boaters and anglers — that is until we of the Chattooga Coalition for Save our Solitude (S.O.S.) jumped in.

What was our beef?

We believed that the Forest Service split the pie between the anglers and boaters and left out a lot of people and subsequently failed to follow the dictates of Congress not only in the Chattooga River "Wild and Scenic River System." act, but the more restrictive "National Wilderness Preservation System" act, Public law 88-577, that Congress passed in September of 1964 for people seeking privacy, remoteness and solitude in the Ellicott Rock Wilderness along the Chattooga River.

No one was addressing this act and this act covers the Ellicott Rock Wilderness area which is embedded into the Chattooga River corridor for several miles. Paddlers would have to go through this very restrictive area, if they were allowed to at all, that is designated for remote, primitive solitude.

This act, aka, as the "Wilderness Act," has special provisions distinct and distant from all other acts that are being focused on at this time by the U.S.F.S.

The Ellicott Rock is a monumental landmark very sacred and considered a power place by Native Americans. it is not to be desecrated by people who want to play in its vicinity.

The Ellicott Wilderness area is to, "retain it's primeval charter and influence," "has Outstanding OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOLITUDE OR A PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED TYPE OF RECREATION. Remember the key word here is primitive recreation, not modern.

First and foremost Ellicott Rock Wilderness is a "preserve." That's not our view, that what the U.S. Congress has passed into law.

Solitude is a state of being solitary or alone; seclusion; remoteness; a lonely or secluded place, e.g.: "Jesus went into the wilderness alone to seek solitude." He didn't bring a camel, kayak, rifle, bow or shot-gun. Yes, the Forest Service allows hunting not only in and around the Ellicott Rock monument, but along the banks of the river where people hike or blend in with nature.

I have no problem with guns I was in the Army, but is this the best place for guns, in a place for solitude?

There are many reasons people seek out the most remote and primitive areas of a forest, that's why Congress set these "Wilderness Areas" aside, not to be disturbed forever.

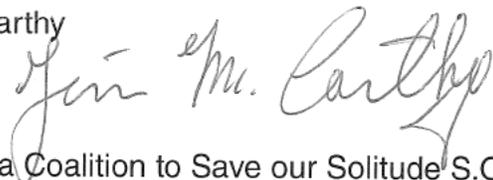
Going back to the "National Wild and Scenic River System" act, Sec. 10(b); without reading the entire section, it states that when one act crosses into the other's turf "the more restrictive provisions shall apply!"

Again it states the same in section (c).

So when American Whitewater and the anglers are considering splitting the river among themselves they should be considerate of others who have an equal and fair right to its use, especially in the Ellicott Rock Wilderness area. And why not, the anglers have use of the whole 57 miles of river right now, the paddlers have 36 miles of river zoned for them and for solitude seekers who are looking for that quiet set-aside remote area there is no area in the entire 57 miles corridor for them, not even in the Ellicott Rock Wilderness area that was designated by Congress to have OUTSTANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOLITUDE.

Before one paddler or one angler gets another inch of the Chattooga River for themselves we the solitude seekers want our own zoned area in the Ellicott Rock Wilderness area as Congress had intended. Because once these primitive remote areas are gone they are gone forever.

Jim McCarthy



Chattooga Coalition to Save our Solitude S.O.S.

P.O. Box 905

Dillsboro, NC 28725

888-631-1416



"John Stephens "
<jdt4f@mindspring.com>

11/20/2007 10:42 AM

Please respond to
jdt4f@mindspring.com

To "NC Div Wildlf" <wrccomments@ncwildlife.org>, "Jeff
Durniak" <jeff_durniak@dnr.state.ga.us>, "jcleeves"
<jcleeves@fs.fed.us>
cc "Lee Keefer" <lee_keefer@dnr.state.ga.us>

bcc

Subject Upper Chattooga Boater Conflict

To all concerned,

Saw this in a recent Sumpter NF summary statement that this is what the boaters expect to get. The statement below is enough to convince many that any boating on the upper Chattooga is a disaster for the environment and all the present users of this section of the river. It speaks of hundreds of boats of every imaginable type running down the course of the river at a ever increasing rate:

allowing "year-round access for self-guided groups of non-commercial, non-motorized canoeists and kayakers" to float the river.

The final decision on river use of the Upper Chattooga is about to be made public in December of 2007. I would like to emphasize once more that this would be a disaster. I am sending this to all who are involved in this final study.

John Stephens
Chattahoochee Nantahala Chapter TU692

John Stephens
jdt4f@mindspring.com
EarthLink Revolves Around You.



Laurie
<berrydorroh@bellsouth.net>
12/01/2007 11:21 AM

To jcleeves@fs.fed.us
cc
bcc
Subject boating on Chattooga headwaters

Mr. Cleeves,

We are writing to express our deep support for the current use plan for the Chattooga River, which currently prohibits motorboating on the headwaters of the Chattooga River while permitting it on most of the river. The current plan is fair and allows the maximum enjoyment and recreational use of the river for all its users, including motorboating, canoeing, kayaking, hiking, etc.

Please do not allow one segment of the recreational use population to dominate over the interests of others and ruin the headwaters experience for the rest by allowing motorboating on the Chattooga river headwaters,

Thank you for allowing us to voice our concern on this matter.

Sincerely,

Dan Dorroh and Laurie Berry-Dorroh
214 Bordeaux Drive
Simpsonville, SC 29680

Mr. Chris Brown
Director Wilderness & Wild & Scenic Rivers
USDA Forest Service
National Forest System Office
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-0003



December 20th, 2007

Dear Chris,

We are writing to voice our frustration and concern regarding delays in the Sumter National Forest's process for amending their Land and Resources Management Plan. This amendment process was triggered by our appeal of the 2004 plan. The appeal decision granted the Sumter National Forest (SNF) two years to complete a user capacity analysis and issue a new management plan. This process has encountered delays at every step, and this week we were notified of an additional delay of at least two months. The "pre-decisional environmental assessment" is now predicted to be released in mid-February. This release will be followed by a comment period and then a decisional period that could extend months. This is not consistent with the Record of Decision on our appeal – and violates our interests as successful appellants.

These delays are about to senselessly rob the American people of yet another spring paddling season on one of our Wild and Scenic Rivers. It has been 32 years since paddling was first banned on the Chattooga – an entire generation. It has been 13 years since we first requested access to the river. On January 30th it will be 4 years since the flawed SNF plan was released which erroneously renewed the boating ban, and this spring will mark three years since that plan fell to our appeal. All this time, my entire lifespan, there has been no reason to prohibit paddling and virtually no protective management of the river corridor. We are asking that you recognize the costs that these delays have on American citizens that love wild rivers – and on the Chattooga River itself.

These delays have cost the Forest Service – and the taxpayers - an enormous amount of money. We represent paddlers that strongly value public land management and the ability to recreate on protected federal lands. As such our members and our organization proactively support congressional funding of federal land management. We are investing our time and resources in your agency so that you can in turn invest in the places and experiences we cherish. In most cases the Forest Service does an admirable job. In this case however, your agency is irresponsibly wasting scarce resources. The recreational component of the SNF's forest planning process – going back at least to 2002 – has been nothing but a reckless and costly attempt to manage the Chattooga differently than all other rivers in the system. A defensible corrective decision that restored nationally consistent management in 2004, 2005, or 2007 would have ceased the never-ending waste that this process has become. Instead we are paying dearly for much ado about nothing.

These delays have failed to resolve anything. Delays would perhaps be justified if the SNF had used this time to reduce social values conflicts through leadership and education, build consensus through facilitation, and most importantly build understanding for a new defensible decision. They have attempted none of these things. Instead they have fostered contempt among user groups by pitting one against another and offering inequitable management as a likely if not certain outcome. Instead they have built a shaky record of only *final* documents at every step without ever offering the public a draft document to review and offer comments on. Instead their analysis has resulted in a dizzying and ever changing number of alternatives that all seem to violate any concept of nationally consistent river management – or fairness. In short the “process” the SNF has developed may look reasonable on paper, but to participants it has been frustrating, counterproductive, and ultimately unresponsive.

As you are aware, the USFS is in the process of implementing new forest planning regulations that significantly reduce the role of science, the analytical procedural standards, and appeal opportunities. The SNF may be intentionally delaying their decision with the hopes of issuing it under the new regulations should they become available – undercutting the process of the past 4-13 years. Any attempt to use these new regulations to subvert public interests in this ongoing project would not be acceptable to the many stakeholders who have invested years in the process.

We urge you to assist the SNF with promptly issuing an amended Land and Resources Management Plan for the upper Chattooga River. A prompt, legal, and nationally consistent decision will end the impacts on Americans who simply want to float down a beautiful river. It will end the incredible waste of resources, and let the USFS allocate funds responsibly to resource protection and enjoyment. It will mend the rift between user groups that the SNF has created and maintained for over three decades. It will allow a resolution under NEPA that will likely end the process rather than initiating another set of challenges. It will avoid terrible precedents. It is the responsible thing to do.

Thank you for considering the interests of the thousands of Americans who simply want to float down Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Respectfully,



Kevin Colburn
National Stewardship Director
American Whitewater
1035 Van Buren St
Missoula, MT 59802
(406) 543-1802

Cc: USFS Chief Gail Kimbell, Jim Bedwell, Chuck Myers, Mark Singleton, Don Kinser, Charlene Coleman, Brian Jacobson, Nathan Galbreath