



**Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service, Southern Region
4931 Broad River Road Columbia, SC 29212**

Contact: Michelle Burnett (803) 561-4091

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Forest Service Seeks Comments on Upper Chattooga River Draft Environmental Assessment

Preferred alternative allows some new limited boating opportunities on the upper river

(Columbia, SC, July 2, 2008) The U.S. Forest Service today released a pre-decisional Environmental Assessment (EA) of recreation uses on the upper Chattooga Wild and Scenic River. The public will have 30 days to comment on the agency's preferred alternative and accompanying EA.

"After two years of considerable analysis and extensive public involvement, we reviewed eight alternatives in detail and selected a preferred alternative, Alternative 4, which allows some new limited boating opportunities on portions of the upper Chattooga," said Sumter National Forest Supervisor Jerome Thomas. "It also takes steps to reduce resource damage from existing and future recreation uses."

"Our proposal maintains the existing high quality trout fishing experience on the Chattooga while providing some additional opportunities for challenging whitewater boating in a remote setting," said Thomas. "Specifically, boating will be allowed from County Line Road Trail in North Carolina to Burrells Ford Bridge between December 1 and March 1 when mean daily flow levels average 450 cfs or more, which is above those levels considered optimal for fishing."

The Forest Service preferred alternative also calls for limiting overnight camping in the upper Chattooga to designated sites and closing and/or rehabilitating a number of user-created campsites and trails. To relieve congestion and reduce impacts, roadside parking will also be prohibited within ¼ mile of Burrells Ford bridge.

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The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

2-2-2-2 Forest Service Seeks Public Comment on Upper Chattooga River Draft Environmental Assessment

Comments on the pre-decisional EA are due to the Forest Service by August 1, 2008. They may be e-mailed to comments-southern-francismarion-sumter@fs.fed.us or surface mailed to U.S. Forest Service, Chattooga River Project, 4931 Broad River Road, Columbia, SC 29212. A copy of the pre-decisional EA and a summary of the alternatives is available on the Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests' web site at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/fms> where additional background information can be found.

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