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USDA FOREST SERVICE, 160A ZILICOA STREET, ASHEVILLE, NC 28801

NEWS • RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Boating Flows on the Cheoah River to Begin September 17

ROBBINSVILLE, N.C.— Flows on the Cheoah River will be increased to offer high quality recreational boating beginning on September 17. For the first time in 70 years - since construction of the Santeetlah Dam - recreational boating will be possible on the river. Two additional flows are scheduled for October 1 and November 2. Nineteen similar one-day releases are scheduled on an annual basis beginning in 2006. The Cheoah River is located on the Nantahala National Forest near Robbinsville. The U.S. Forest Service will be managing the recreational activities.

The river has many Class IV/IV+ rapids and lots of residual vegetation that will require a high skill level to negotiate—only advanced or expert boaters with proper equipment should attempt running the river this fall. While not offered in 2005, in future years, expert guides will be available to lead raft trips.

Because there is very limited parking adjacent to the river, it is strongly recommended boaters use the shuttle service. The September 17 and October 1 shuttles will leave from Robbinsville High School. For the November 2 release, shuttles will pick up boaters at the old gym located on Knight Street in Robbinsville just off US 129. The total cost for boaters will be \$16 – this includes \$10 for the shuttle service (which includes a trip to scout the river, transportation to the put-ins, and return from the take-out); \$3 to the Forest Service for current facility rentals and for future river construction projects, and a \$3 parking fee to support the Graham County Rescue Squad. The first shuttle will leave

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the High School at 8 AM and they will depart in 15-minute increments, with the last shuttle leaving from the take-outs at 5 PM. Shuttles have the ability to transport passengers along with their boats and equipment. Launch windows will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. Each shuttle is limited to a maximum of 16 hard boats (canoes or kayaks) or six rafts.

The high water section of the Cheoah River is nine miles long. To ensure public safety, the following regulations will be enforced on the Cheoah River during recreational boating days:

- No alcoholic beverages within 500 feet of the river.
- No camping within 500 feet of the river.
- No nighttime floating, rafting, or tubing (between sunset and sunrise).
- No parking within 500 feet of the river, except in designated parking areas.
- No watercraft used other than non-motorized, hard-bottom canoes and kayaks, or inflatable watercraft with a minimum of four (4) internal air chambers.
- Users must wear a helmet and a properly fitted personal floatation device (PFD) rated “Coast Guard Approved (Type III, III/V, or V)”.

During the 2005 releases the Forest Service will be conducting a capacity analysis to determine the number and type of boaters that can safely use the river for future years. The information generated will help manage future private and commercial use of the river in accordance with our Forest Plan Standards.

Lodging is available in Robbinsville – interested boaters can contact the Graham County Travel and Tourism Board at 818-479-3790. Additional information about the Cheoah River can also be found on the American Whitewater website:

“www.americanwhitewater.org” or by contacting the Cheoah Ranger District at 828-479-6431.