

# Boat access on Chattooga pushed back

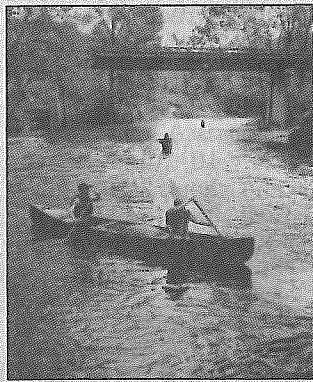
## Forest Service gets more than 3,000 comments from public

By Anna Simon  
CLEMSON BUREAU  
asimon@greenvillenews.com

The U.S. Forest Service has delayed its preliminary decision to allow limited boating on upper sections of the Chattooga River.

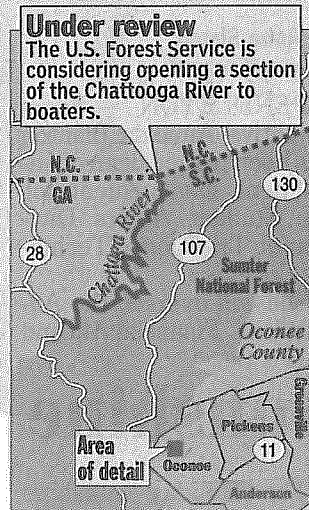
The agency said the decision remains under review and won't be released this month as planned.

"Our timeline has slipped for several reasons," said Jerome Thomas, supervisor for the Francis Marion and Sumter national forests, who cited an extended public comment period and overwhelming response. "We are working hard to complete our work, but we won't be releasing our final decision until next year."



FILE

Canoers paddle past a fly fisherman on the Chattooga River.



**Under review**  
The U.S. Forest Service is considering opening a section of the Chattooga River to boaters.

KIM SUMMERS / Staff

The public comment period, extended at the request of constituents, brought more than 3,000 individual e-mails and letters, which are being analyzed, Thomas said.

If enacted, the plan would allow boating on the river north of the State 28 bridge in Oconee County to County Line Road Trail in North Carolina. The river south of the bridge is currently open year-round to boaters and is popular with kayakers and white-water enthusiasts.

Boaters could use the upper section of the river between Dec. 1 and March 1 when mean daily flow levels average 450 cubic feet per second or more, which is above levels considered optimal for fishing.

It also would limit overnight camping in the upper Chattooga to designated sites, and either close or rehabilitate some user-

created campsites and trails. To relieve congestion and reduce impacts, roadside parking will be prohibited within a quarter mile of the Burrells Ford bridge.

The Forest Service's environmental assessment of recreation uses on the upper Chattooga has stirred outdoor enthusiasts on both sides of the issue.

Boaters say they would welcome the opportunity to kayak and raft on calmer sections of the river, while fishermen, hikers and campers prefer to protect the area's solitude.

To see a copy of the pre-decisional environmental assessment and a summary of the alternatives, go to [www.fs.fed.us/r8/fms](http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/fms).