

2004 Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests

Revised Land and Resource Management Plan

Amendment # 1

January 2012

This amendment manages the mix of recreation opportunities offered on the main stem of the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River (WSR) above Highway 28.

The agency will make the following changes to the 2004 Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests:

➤ **Page 3-21.** Standard 2.A.-1 is amended as follows:

After “**2.A.-1** Floating on the Chattooga River is not allowed upstream of the Highway 28 bridge” replace the period with a comma and add, “except non-commercial boating is allowed on approximately 17 miles of the 21-mile main stem only from December 1 to April 30 from the confluence of Green Creek downstream to the designated take out within one-quarter mile downstream of the Lick Log confluence by issuance of a self-registration boating permit consistent with 36 C.F.R. § 261.77, with the following conditions:

- A. Boating is allowed from the time that flows reach 350 cfs or greater at the USGS Burrells Ford gauge during daylight hours. Once boating is allowed, it may continue until 30 minutes after official sunset on that same day.
- B. Boaters must use tandem/single-capacity hard boats or tandem/single-capacity inflatable boats;
- C. Boaters must start or complete their trip at specific put ins and take outs at the following locations:
 1. Within one-quarter mile downstream of the Green Creek confluence;
 2. Within 500 feet of the Norton Mill Creek confluence;
 3. Within one-quarter mile of Bullpen Bridge;
 4. Within one-quarter miles of Burrells Ford Bridge; and
 5. Within one-quarter mile downstream of the Lick Log Creek confluence.
- D. The self-registration boating permit will:
 1. Specify boater put ins and take outs and safety equipment for boaters.
 2. Require that boating groups be limited to a maximum group size of six people and a minimum group size of two craft.”

➤ **Page 3-25.** Standard 2.A.-20 is added and reads as follows: Above the Highway 28 bridge, backcountry group sizes will be limited as follows: maximum 12 people per group on trails; six people per group at designated campsites, except at designated large group campsites; and four people per angling group.

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- **Page 3-25.** Standard 2.A.-21 is added and reads as follows: Above the Highway 28 bridge, large woody debris removal without agency approval is prohibited.
- **Page 3-25.** Standard 2.A.-22 is added and reads as follows: Above the Highway 28 bridge, camping is allowed only in designated campsites. Campfires are allowed only in designated fire rings. Visitors may use existing sites until site-specific NEPA analysis is completed and sites are designated.
- **Page 3-25.** Add the following guidelines after Standard 2A-22.

Guidelines

G2.A-1. Above the Highway 28 bridge, the visitor capacities in Table 1 should not be exceeded.

Figure 1. Capacities in four frontcountry areas in the upper segment of the Chattooga WSR.

Frontcountry Areas	Groups at One Time ¹	People at One Time
Grimshawes/Sliding Rock Bridge	25	65
Bullpen Road Bridge Area	15	40
Burrells Ford Bridge Area	80	205
Highway 28 Bridge Area	35	85

¹ The number of groups at one time equals the number of designated parking spaces in each frontcountry area.

Figure 2. Capacities in four backcountry reaches in the upper segment of the Chattooga WSR.

Backcountry Reach	Average Groups per Weekday	Average People per Weekday ²	Average Groups per Weekend Day	Average People per Weekend Day ²
Chattooga Cliffs	5	10	10	15
Ellicott Rock	10	35	20	110
Rock Gorge	15	40	30	95
Nicholson Fields	15	40	30	95

² Average number of people per group varies by reach.

- **Pages 3-27, 3-29 and 3-31.** Add the following statement to the desired condition following the last paragraph for designated wild, scenic and recreational segments:

Above the Highway 28 bridge

Within the river corridor, recreation users stay on designated trails. Trail system, including portage trails, is designed to minimize encounters and conflict while being environmentally sustainable. Redundant trails, trails where resource damage cannot be mitigated and trails that exacerbate encounters or conflict will be closed or rerouted.

Campsites are designed to accommodate no more than three tents per site, except at group-designated sites, to limit encounters and conflict and to be

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environmentally sustainable. Redundant campsites, campsites where resource damage cannot be mitigated, and campsites that exacerbate encounters or conflict will be closed or relocated.

- **Page 5-7.** Add the following Monitoring Plan and Adaptive Management Strategy (from Appendix G of the EA) after question #19:

20. In the Chattooga River Corridor above Highway 28, are endangered, sensitive and locally rare plant species or aquatic habitats being affected by:

- a) **Recreation use;**
- b) **Additional large woody debris (LWD); or**
- c) **Removal of LWD by users?**

Populations of the following plant species will be monitored for the first two years to determine their continual presence:

- *Lejeunea bloomquistii*, *Listera smallii*, and *Lophocolea appalachiana*

Large woody debris (LWD) will be monitored annually for the first two years and periodically thereafter, to determine if aquatic habitat and endangered, sensitive and locally rare plant species are being impacted by recreation use or by increased levels of LWD.

21a. Are at-one-time vehicle counts at frontcountry and backcountry parking areas changing?

Monitoring Element: Vehicles-at-one time

21b. What is the proportion of recreation use by type of visitor in frontcountry areas and backcountry reaches and how is this use related to vehicle counts?

Monitoring Element: Groups-at-one-time in the frontcountry, people-at-one-time in the frontcountry, groups per day in the backcountry, people per day in the backcountry, vehicles-at-one time

21c. How is total daily backcountry use related to the number encounters? Is the number of encounters affecting opportunities for solitude in the backcountry? How do the number of encounters compare to user tolerances?

Monitoring Element: Encounters in the backcountry

21d. How are daily frontcountry use levels affecting perceived crowding, congestion or desired experiences in frontcountry areas?

Monitoring Element: Perceptions of crowding and congestion

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Monitoring will measure frontcountry use (groups at one time or GAOT) and backcountry use (groups per day or GPD) and correlate them with the average number of vehicles-at-one-time (VAOT) in select parking areas that provide access to the frontcountry and backcountry. Monitoring will focus on peak times of the day during the high-use season (summer), and will distinguish information for weekdays and weekends. These are the most likely days when use may approach capacities that could impact opportunities for solitude in the backcountry. However, monitoring also will include vehicle counts during other moderate use times of the year (winter, spring, and fall).

In addition, the agency will use information from monitoring to correlate vehicle counts to proportions of use associated with 1) frontcountry/backcountry recreation; 2) day/overnight recreation; 3) hiking/backpacking/angling/boating use in backcountry reaches and frontcountry areas. Monitoring will also help the agency examine relationships between use and impacts (e.g., river, trail or camp encounters). Monitoring will also show the proportion of different types of users during high-use periods, which may help design permit systems that manage the contributions of different types of use. If use on high-use days is disproportionately one type of user (e.g., day use hikers, anglers, or boaters), permit systems could establish equitable allocations within different use categories to reduce this problem, or possibly target the highest use groups only. For example, several multi-day western rivers require permits for boating (the highest type of use, with greater demand) but not for backpackers (with much lower use and demand). The issues and considerations in developing effective and publically acceptable permit systems are complex (Whittaker and Shelby, 2008); additional planning and public involvement will be conducted before implementation of a specific system for the upper segment of the Chattooga WSR.

With improved information about use and related impacts, the agency will be able to validate if the prescribed capacities are set at appropriate levels. The agency may measure use by mechanical counters, systematic observations, self-registration programs or surveys. If surveys are conducted, reported trail, river and camp encounters (as well as tolerances for them) will also be measured and correlated with use.

The monitoring described will assess whether existing or new uses are causing resource impacts. Monitoring also will indicate whether capacities or other management actions need to be adjusted.

Adaptive Management

Direct and indirect limits will be applied to all recreation users based on monitoring. Forest Service Manual 2323.12 indicates a preference for using indirect use limits and management actions to address impact problems before employing direct ones. The initial appeal decision on the Sumter RLRMP (USFS, 2005) also suggests that, although a plan could apply use restrictions (e.g., “disallow or restrict the number of (private and commercial) on-river and in-corridor recreation users, determine the type of recreation use, or dictate the timing of such use”), this “authority should be exercised only with adequate evidence of the need for such restrictions.”

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In general, management responses to increasing use or impacts will focus on indirect measures first, but direct measures may be used if indirect measures are insufficient (FSM 2354.41 a, pp. 48-50). Indirect measures generally attempt to redistribute recreational use by encouraging users to visit lower use segments or times, or by changing infrastructure (e.g., reducing the size of some parking lots) to match capacity goals and cue users to use other areas. Direct measures regulate behavior through restrictions or formal use limit systems (e.g., permits); they can ensure a capacity is met, but also may create a more “heavy-handed” management footprint that restricts individual choice.

If direct measures are needed, monitoring will help identify the specific type of use and encounters that are at issue, and develop appropriate regulations or a permit system that will address the use or impact problem. For example, if monitoring shows that competition for backcountry campsites or camp encounters are the impacts that exceed tolerances, a permit system that targets overnight use will make more sense than an “all user” permit system. Similarly, if high use was focused during a specific season, type of day, or segment, permits could be required for those defined times and locations only (e.g., the Delayed Harvest area on weekends during the Delayed Harvest season).

Results from monitoring vehicle counts will be compared to the 2007 vehicle counts to assess use trends and determine whether estimates are approaching capacities for these locations. If monitoring shows that higher use could be allowed and still provide the same levels of opportunities for solitude without degrading the ORVs, the US Forest Service may adjust capacities as appropriate. If average counts in a month are more than 10% higher than the 2007 average count for the highest use month (indicating an increasing use trend), adaptive management could be triggered.

- **Appendix B Page B-30.** Following “growing stock volume” add “**guideline**” and define as “A generally preferred or advisable course of action or level of attainment designed to promote achievement of goals and objectives.”
- **Appendix B Page B-18.** Before “daylighting” add “**daylight hours**” and define as, “Thirty minutes before official sunrise to 30 minutes after official sunset.”

Appendix B Page B-19. Following “den trees” add “**designated**” and define as “Planned, designed and maintained by the U.S. Forest Service (see also “system”).

Then add “**designated campsite**” and define as “Campsites that are planned, designed and maintained to minimize biophysical impacts.”

Then add “**designated put-ins**” and define as “A river access point where boaters launch their craft.”

Then add “**designated takeouts**” and define as “A river access point where boaters take their craft out of the river.”

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Then add “**designated trail**” and define as “Trails that are planned, designed and maintained to minimize biophysical impacts.”

Following “sympatric” add “**system**” and define as “Planned, designed and maintained by the U.S. Forest Service (see also “designated”).”

- **Appendix B Page B-12.** Following “authorized use” add “**backcountry**” and define as “An area that lies beyond one-quarter mile of identified roads and bridges. In these areas, visitors are more interested in opportunities that feature solitude, self-reliance, a sense of remoteness and a primitive setting.”
- **Appendix B Page B-28.** Following “free-to-grow” add “**frontcountry**” and define as “An area that lies within one-quarter mile of identified roads and bridges. These areas offer easy access to the national forest where visitors are more tolerant of interaction with others as long as at-one-time use does not overwhelm the natural setting or create high levels of crowding and congestion.”
- **Appendix G.** At the end of the Monitoring Summary Table, add questions 20 – 21a - 21d in the attachment.

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MQ#	Question	Element	Method of Collection	Duration/Frequency	Reporting Interval	Needed Precision	Needed Reliability	Responsibility
20	In the Chattooga River Corridor above Highway 28, are endangered, sensitive and locally rare plant species or aquatic habitats being affected by: a) Recreation use; b) Additional large woody debris (LWD); or c) Removal of LWD by users?	endangered, sensitive and locally rare plant species, aquatic habitats, LWD.	Direct Survey	Annual	Annual	Moderate	Moderate	Forest Ecologist or Forest Biologist

MQ#	Question	Element	Method of Collection	Duration/Frequency	Reporting Interval	Needed Precision	Needed Reliability	Responsibility
21a	Are at-one-time vehicle counts at frontcountry and backcountry parking areas changing?	vehicles-at-one time	Direct Survey	Periodically	Periodically	Moderate	Moderate	Forest and District Recreation Specialists
21b	What is the proportion of recreation use by type of visitor in frontcountry and backcountry areas and how is this use related to vehicle counts?	groups-at-one-time in frontcountry, people-at-one-time in frontcountry, groups per day in backcountry,	Direct Survey, mechanical counters, systematic observations	Periodically	Periodically	Moderate	Moderate	Forest and District Recreation Specialists

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21c	<p>How is total daily backcountry use related to the number of encounters? Is the number of encounters affecting opportunities for solitude in the backcountry? How do the number of encounters compare to user tolerances?</p>	<p>people per day in backcountry, vehicles-at-one time</p>	<p>Direct Survey, systematic observations</p>	<p>Periodically</p>	<p>Periodically</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Forest and District Recreation Specialists</p>
21d	<p>How are daily frontcountry use levels affecting perceived crowding, congestion or desired experiences in frontcountry areas?</p>	<p>perceptions of crowding and congestion</p>	<p>Direct Survey, systematic observations</p>	<p>Periodically</p>	<p>Periodically</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Forest and District Recreation Specialists</p>