



# Tuck Tales

*Newsletter of the Tuckaseige Chapter #373 of Trout Unlimited serving the western North Carolina counties of Haywood, Jackson, Macon and Swain*

A Monthly Newsletter

September, 2008

Chapter member Tom Massie will make a brief presentation to the chapter at the September meeting about the Camo Coalition. The North Carolina Camouflage Coalition is a statewide electronic network of sportsmen and women that allows hunters and anglers to monitor and impact issues that affect hunting, fishing, and conservation on a local, state, and national level. The purpose of the Camouflage Coalition is to organize hunters and anglers to act quickly when issues arise that affect hunting and fishing. See the article below from the Coalition. The chapter will meet on Tuesday evening, September 2nd at 6:30 PM in the meeting room at the rear of the United Community Bank of Sylva.

## Action Requested

**Issue: Quality trout fishing and hunting are threatened in the Upper Chattooga River !!** Boaters want to open the river to unrestricted use by all kinds of floating vessels. The Forest Service needs to hear from you now to maintain your opportunity for quality hunting and fishing experiences in this wilderness area.

**Background:** In 1974, the Chattooga River was designated as a National Wild and Scenic River due to its biodiversity, its pristine watershed, its beautiful scenery, and its thriving wildlife community. The river and surrounding area provide places for fishing, hunting, hiking, swimming, wildlife viewing, and whitewater boating. The Chattooga North Fork is listed in Trout Unlimited 100 Best Trout Rivers in America and is prime undisturbed habitat for black bear, white-tailed deer, ruffed grouse, and wild turkey. The entire Chattooga watershed remains one of the largest wilderness areas in Eastern US. The river is one of the largest free-flowing trout streams in southern Appalachia and supports a healthy, reproducing trout fishery. The area is also one of the southeast region's and country's prime examples of productive wildlife habitat

and offers extensive wild places, well deserving of sound management practices.

The original **1976 Chattooga Management Plan** instituted a zoning policy that balances uses between competing recreational activities. The lower 36 miles of the Chattooga are open to boating while the upper 21 miles of river are preserved for anglers, hunters, birders, and hikers. The policy transformed the lower Chattooga into a world-class whitewater resource while the upper Chattooga remained a haven for hunters, fishermen, and wildlife. The balanced policy is an exemplary model for river management that has resulted in high visitor satisfaction by offering a broad spectrum of recreational opportunities while protecting the resource from overuse. Now boating interests are demanding the Forest Service open the entire river corridor for immediate and unregulated boating access (any number of boats, anytime, any water level) for rafting, canoeing, and kayaking the Upper Chattooga. The Forest Service must not abandon the successful management plan already in place on the Chattooga River just because a sector of the boating community claims unfair treatment on the upper stretch of the river. Any relaxation of the protected status of the Upper Chattooga will set a precedent leading to loss of other undisturbed areas where the public can hunt, fish, and

visit in solitude without the intrusion of high impact uses. We must protect our pristine areas from overuse, and we must start now.

**Comments Are Needed:** In response to the demands of boating interests to open the Upper Chattooga, the US Forest Service spent over \$1 million performing a Visitor Use Capacity Analysis to develop a wide range of alternative management regimes for the Upper Chattooga ranging from the current "no boats" to "wide open" boating. We believe that the "no boating" option is the best one in this pristine stretch of river to protect sensitive habitats and to continue traditional uses for fishing and hunting and other low impact activities.



*Wild Lives, Wild Places*

We must respond to the US Forest Service to demonstrate strong concern by outdoor enthusiasts for protection of the Upper Chattooga.

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