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First name: Kimberly

Last name: Kerce

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Woody Debris

Part of the project includes adding large woody debris along "Variable locations along 1,162 miles of project area streams." These streams are not specified and this is very concerning to me as an avid Georgia kayaker.

The only part of the decision tree for woody debris is whether or not the stream is a 'Is it a state designated trout stream?' There isn't any consideration for other sports. When I asked in the Public Forum, they said they had not considered/included boaters and that it was the first time she'd heard any concern about it. Looking at the original description of the project, I never would have thought dumping wood into popular creeks would be part of it.

Some designated trout streams in the area that are also boating runs include Chattooga, Conasauga, Toccoa, Amicalola, Duke's Creek, Dick's Creek, Moccasin Creek, Holly Creek, Warwoman Creek, Wildcat Creek, Tallulah, Panther Creek, Boggs Creek, and Cooper Creek. This isn't a comprehensive list; I had to look up which streams are considered 'designated trout streams' so may have missed something.

Creeks like Holly, Warwoman and Conasauga (including sections called, "upper upper" and just "upper") are very popular with local (and regional) boaters when they have enough water to be runnable. Chattooga and Tallulah are classics, and people travel to the Southeast to run them.

A similar woody debris addition was done in Chauga, though the forest service included the whitewater community in that discussion, and the results have still created hazards for boaters. These large logs form strainers/entrapment/pin hazards.

At Chauga, one of these logs (you could tell the forest service's logs; Chauga's natural logs are smaller and most have branches) was pinned on a slide, in line with the water. There was no obvious benefit to erosion or any of the other stated reasons for putting it there. Thankfully there was an alternate line away from it. In the same trip, I got tangled with a different log, but my crew was able to help me get free.

In the meeting, the ranger explained that this method is less labor intensive but that there are other potentially safer methods. He cited Wildcat Creek as an example.

Is there any way to measure over time how effective this has been? I looked up the reference (Doloff 1994?) to a 26 year old report about brook trout. I was unable to find the original reference, but was able to find another that referenced the same author. Part of what I read stated that the habitat was "more influenced by boulders than LWD"

Trout fishing was the only branch of the decision tree determining large woody debris. Please consider the boating community in the decision tree for locations or better yet, choose safer alternatives. Boaters have to be careful running Chauga, but at least they were at the table when that project was being developed and some consideration was made for where the woody debris was placed.

(I may have submitted this comment twice; the website kept timing out and after I submitted the comment, left and came back, it still didn't show up under the reading room page)