

TO:

Mr. Edward Hunter Jr.
Forest Supervisor, Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests
1755 Cleveland Hwy.
Gainesville GA 30501

FROM:

Scott Deitchman, MD MPH
4045 Balleycastle Lane
Duluth GA 30097
Phone: 404-216-5046

RE: Forest Order Camping Restrictions

I am writing to express support for the proposed Forest Order camping restrictions that would prohibit camping or maintaining a campsite in developed and dispersed areas in excess of 14 days within any 30-day time period. I submit these comments on behalf of the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC), of which I am a member and for which I serve on the GATC Board of Directors as the Conservation Director.

The GATC has enjoyed a long and productive partnership with the management and staff of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests (CONF). We share CONF's concern about the impact of prolonged camping in a single spot. GATC members have reported finding campers "squatting" on sites along the Appalachian Trail. This prolonged usage adversely affects soil and plant integrity, may unduly disturb wildlife, and is at odds with the "leave no trace" wilderness ethic that GATC and other wilderness organizations work so hard to promote.

We interpret the language "dispersed areas" to include trail side campsites along the Appalachian Trail, both established and impromptu, and we support that inclusion. We hope this language also includes the established Appalachian Trail shelters, as members have reported finding individuals in inappropriately long-term occupancy of the shelters, sometimes requiring intervention of Forest Service employees.

The proposed Forest Order would provide clear and enforceable guidance to both forest users and CONF enforcement officials. GATC recommends CONF adopt, and then appropriately publicize, this Forest Order.

Thank you for providing this mechanism to comment on the proposed Forest Order.