

June 1997

Rabun County Trout Unlimited

Tight Lines

Monthly Meeting

Kyle Burrell is on the agenda for the Tuesday, June 17th meeting to present the findings of his research on the Chattooga River. The meeting will be at the Rock House in Clayton, refreshments at 6:30pm, meeting at 7pm.

We will also be discussing the June 20-21 campout so please plan to attend!

Chapter Officers

Dr. Russ Burken - **President**
(706)779-5597

Terry Seehorn - **Vice-President**
(706)746-5227

Russel Johnson - **Treasurer**
(706)782-2424

Sharon Wilson - **Tight Lines Editor**
(706)782-4985

June 20 & 21 Campout On Santeetlah

It is just about time for our June campout. One important thing you need to know if you are planning to come: **the cooks have resigned, bring your own food if you plan to eat while you're there.** Also, bring some **drinking water!** All members should plan to attend if they can, this should be a lot of fun!

Directions: Go to Robbinsville, NC on US 129. One mile north of Robbinsville on US 129, turn left on NC 1116. Go 3.5 mile to NC 1127 and turn right. Travel about 10 miles to Santeetlah Gap. This is the east end of the new Cherohala Highway. Turn left on Cherohala then immediately right on FS81 (gravel road). About one mile to bridge over creek then about 2 or 3 miles to field on right next to Stewart Cabin & SST (sweet smelling toilet). We will camp in the field. **Map on back of this page.**

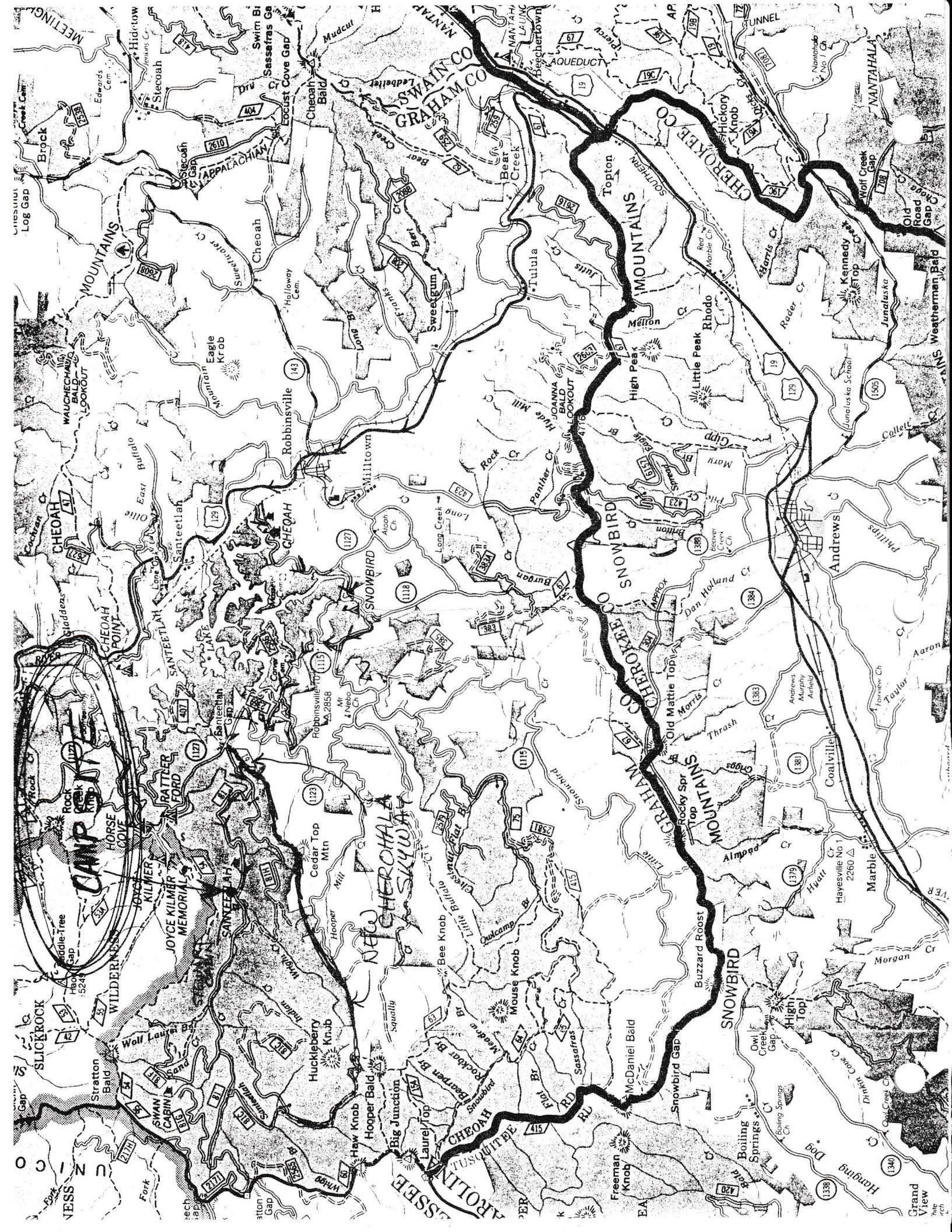
Stocking In A Designated Wilderness

As the issue of Rock Gorge/Chattooga River continues to evolve, questions will continue to surface. Since this is an important issue to the members in the Rabun Chapter you can anticipate seeing a lot of information regarding the Rock Gorge area. There has been some confusion at recent meetings regarding the continuation of the stocking program should Rock Gorge be included in the Ellicott Rock Wilderness. A letter from David G. Holland, Unit Leader, USFS Recreation Programs, dated June 3, 1997, and addressed to Buzz Williams, Executive Director of the Chattooga River Watershed Coalition, states the following:

"Fisheries management in the Rock Gorge area involves stocking of 5"-6" rainbow and brown trout as a put-grow-take fishery. The habitat is marginal for trout, and does not sustain a reproducing trout fishery. Due to this unsuccessful reproduction, the Rock Gorge area is aerially stocked yearly by helicopter in cooperation with both the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

The existing stocking practice is not compatible with Forest Service wilderness management policy and would not be continued if the area were designated wilderness."

For more on the Rock Gorge issue, see pages 3 through 5.



THE DEBATE OVER WILDERNESS

Some of you may be aware of a controversy brewing among TU members and others concerning the proposed expansion/creation of several wilderness areas in Georgia. The catalyst for this issue was a 1995 publication by The Wilderness Society entitled *Georgia's Mountain Treasures* which identified 44 areas that the Society recommended for special protection. One of these areas is located along the Chattooga River in a section known as Rock Gorge, an 11,000 acre parcel that straddles the river between Burrell's Ford and Hwy. 28. The area's most valuable resource is its trout fishery, and therein lies the debate. How can the river best be protected? A wilderness designation would preserve the resource, but possibly at a price.

Troutlines has invited two TU members to contribute opposing viewpoints on this issue. Both Greg Moran and Doug Adams have been closely involved with the ongoing process of revising the Chattahoochee and Sumter Forest Plans. These plans are the guiding documents that determine how the Forests will be used and managed for the next ten years. We encourage you to send your comments and opinions to the addresses below, or to us here at *Troutlines*.

USDA Forest Service
Attn: Planning Team
1755 Cleveland Hwy.
Gainesville GA 30501

USDA Forest Service
Attn: Planning Team
4931 Broad River Rd.
Columbia SC 29210

Letter to the Editor - Doug Adams

Dear Editor:

Baseball, Apple Pie, Motherhood and Wilderness are as good and wholesome as the American Flag. Well, the baseball strike was about greed, most apple pie comes from the frozen food section, Susan Smith in Union, SC drowned her two young sons and—"Wilderness" is not always the best way to manage our natural resources.

I am a trout enthusiast. I am beginning my 42nd season trout fishing the Chattooga River. My wife and I moved to Rabun County from DeKalb County 32 seasons ago so that we would be closer to the Chattooga. I have fished the Chattooga as often as 70 to 80 times in a year.

I have been active in the Chattooga River Coalition since it was organized in 1985. The purpose of the Coalition is to give special emphasis to protection and enhancement of the fishery resources, water quality and

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overall biological health of the Chattooga River and its watershed. The principal goal of the Coalition is to provide a workable guide/plan of action for those agencies and individuals responsible for or interested in the management of the Chattooga River fishery resource. The Coalition is comprised of representatives from USDA Forest Service from GA, SC and NC, SC DNR, GA DNR, NC WRC and Trout Unlimited from GA, SC and NC. We meet annually in January. The Coalition has spawned two TU chapters: the Rabun (GA) Chapter in 1986 and the Chattooga (SC) Chapter in 1988.

I oppose the Wilderness Society's proposal to reclassify as "Wilderness" the Rock Gorge area of the Chattooga River for the following reasons:

- The "Wild and Scenic River" classification is more than adequate to protect the river and to provide a true wilderness experience for the occasional visitor.
- The proposed "Wilderness" designation will be like a magnet, attracting large numbers of visitors. This

Letter to the Editor - Greg Moran

In early 1996, the US Forest Service (USFS) started developing a new forest plan for managing the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests. As part of the planning process, the USFS will be determining which areas will be or will not be open for road building and timber cutting. The USFS will also consider areas for special protection, such as wilderness. This one issue of setting aside areas for special protection has sparked not only a heated but emotionally charged debate. Unfortunately, the emotional side of this debate has at times obscured the facts. The one area that has drawn the most attention recently is Rock Gorge, which surrounds the Chattooga River from Burrell's Ford to Hwy. 28.

The Chattooga River was designated a Wild and Scenic River in 1974. The Wild and Scenic corridor, which is one-half to one mile wide,

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*Doug Adams' letter
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results in overuse and destroys the sense of solitude that the Wilderness Act strives to attain. The Ellicott Rock Scenic Area, when designated a "Wilderness" in 1975, soon became one of the most visited "Wilderness" areas (visitors per acre per year) in the entire USDA Forest Service, nationwide. In order to reduce the overuse, the Ellicott Rock Wilderness Area Management Plan provides for possible use of a reservation system and/or methods to reduce the number of day-use fishermen. As in the Ellicott Rock Wilderness Area, the visitors will concentrate into narrow corridors along the trail system that will primarily follow water courses with camping taking place in riparian zones. The steep topograph and dense vegetation will inhibit cross-country travel.

- The studies, samplings and surveys conducted by the Coalition during the past decade have proved that the trout fishery in the river below Big Bend Falls has little or no natural reproduction and is completely dependent on stocking. The proposed "Wilderness" designation precludes the stocking of fish (as it did in the Ellicott Rock Wilderness Area). The Rock Gorge Area of the Chattooga River has received annual stocking of trout for over 50 years. Prior to the "Wild River" designation, the river immediately above and below the Rock Gorge received heavy stocking of adult and fingerling trout by trucks. With the "Wild River" designation, in 1974, the roads were closed inside the corridor and light spring stocking of adult trout were made using helicopters in only four sites on 12 miles of river between Burrells Ford and Hwy. 28. The trout fishery was very poor during this period. For the last 10 years, the intense fall helicopter stocking of "put and grow" sub-adult trout in 11 sites has restored and maintained an excellent wilderness trout fishing experience in the Chattooga River between Reed

Creek and Burrells Ford. The trout are provided by SC DNR and GA DNR. The cost of the helicopter is paid 25% by SC USFS, 25% by GA USFS and 50% by Trout Unlimited. The catch rate and the solitude experienced in the managed fishery of the Rock Gorge Area far exceeds that of the Ellicott Rock Wilderness Area.

- The Wilderness Act of 1964 does allow for stocking of fingerling size fish by primitive means to maintain indigenous species or to perpetuate/recover a threatened or endangered species. This has been done by aircraft in the Rocky Mountain Region of the USFS; however, brown and rainbow trout stockings have not been carried out in the Southern Region Wilderness Areas. The objective of the wildlife and fish management in "Wilderness" is to provide an environment where the focus of natural selection and survival - rather than human actions - determine which and what numbers and species exist.

- The proposed "Wilderness" area includes most of Reed Creek (GA), where numerous instream fish habitat improvement structures have been installed and more are scheduled to be installed by the Coalition in September '97. Reed Creek receives no stocking, and supports a wild fishery of brown and brook trout. The proposed area also included Pigpen Branch (SC), which needs fish habitat improvement structures. Pigpen also supports a wild fishery of brown trout and brook trout without stocking. The proposed "Wilderness" designation precludes fish habitat improvement work.

- The proposed "Wilderness" designation will result in funding requirements for additional trails, trailheads, parking lots, signage, maps, management plans, etc. These are unnecessary expenditures in the present climate of fiscal constraints.

- This area has been considered a candidate for "Wilderness" designation since 1977. Areas can always be re-considered and added to wilderness

classification later; however when it is classified as "Wilderness", it is FOREVER! If a mistake has been made, it cannot be undone.

The Wilderness Society's stated objective for this area is to protect it from logging and road construction in the new forest management plan. The "Wild and Scenic River" corridor (Management Area 8) is approximately one-third of the proposed area and is already well protected. Instead of Management Area 1 (Wilderness), the new forest plan should classify this area as Management Area 4 (MA-4). The MA-4 management goal is to provide a fairly large area of old growth timber where recreationists can experience semi-primitive recreation and a degree of solitude not generally found in the general forest area. The appearance of an essentially natural environment would prevail. The area is NOT available for timber production, no new system roads can be built, ORV use is not allowed, but fish habitat activities and wildlife openings are allowed. There were eight MA-4 tracts in the last Forest Management Plan.

The Coalition, the SC Council of TU and the Rabun Chapter of TU recommend that this area be classified as MA-4 in the new Forest Plan. This recommendation is consistent with the TU mission to conserve, protect and restore trout fisheries and their watersheds.

Sincerely,

Doug Adams

April 27, 1997

Doug Adams was the charter president of the Rabun Chapter of TU at its founding in 1986, and lead it to receive TU's National Silver Trout Award. He is an active member of both the Chattooga River Coalition and the Chattooga River Watershed Coalition. Doug retired in November and describes his current pursuit as "full time research of all the trout streams within a 100 mile radius of Rabun Gap."

Greg Moran's letter
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does not provide adequate protection from road building and logging. The Rock Gorge section with its steep slopes (it drops 100 feet in a little over a mile) is currently open to logging. Building roads and cutting timber in this area would dump sediment in streams that flow into the Chattooga River. Increased sedimentation will not only destroy aquatic habitat, but will cause the river to become wider, shallower and warmer. The Chattooga River already is threatened by increased sedimentation from previous logging activities and development around its headwaters. The Chattooga River is unique in that its headwaters are on private lands, which have seen an increase in development over the past several years. By making Rock Gorge a wilderness, this wild, relatively undisturbed area would be removed from the timber base and would permanently protect a significant stretch of the Chattooga River.

Wilderness is the most restrictive designation and from what has come out of this debate, the least understood. For example, another chapter reported in its newsletter that you could not fish in a wilderness area. This is simply not true. The USFS Wilderness Management Handbook states "angling, hunting and trapping are legitimate wilderness activities...." The main issues surrounding this debate that are important to us as members of Trout Unlimited have been stream improvement projects and fish stocking, particularly of nonindigenous species (rainbow and brown trout). Habitat restoration/improvement projects are allowed in wilderness areas, but they must be accomplished with nonmotorized

equipment. Also the proposed boundaries can be moved to accommodate current stream improvement projects. The stocking of fish in wilderness areas is allowed. Further, the USFS has agreed to continue stocking fish in this area. The question of stocking nonindigenous species is addressed in the USFS Wilderness Management Handbook. "Species of fish traditionally stocked before wilderness designation may be considered indigenous if the species is likely to survive." Rainbow and brown trout not only survive but reproduce here. The other part of the issue of fish stocking centers on the annual helicopter stocking of the Chattooga River. The USFS Wilderness Management Handbook states "Aerial stocking of fish shall be permitted for those waters in wilderness areas where this was an established practice before wilderness designation or where other practical means are not available."

Rock Gorge would be an important wilderness addition to protect Georgia's only Wild and Scenic river. When we consider an area for wilderness, we need to focus on Trout Unlimited's mission to preserve, protect and restore North America's coldwater fisheries. If the proposed area for wilderness fits within the guidelines of TU's mission, then we should support it.

Greg Moran
April 28, 1997

Greg Moran is a former CCTU president and former editor of Troutlines. He has served on the Chattahoochee board of directors since 1992 and is also involved with the Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper and Georgia ForestWatch. In his spare time Greg is also a Chattahoochee River flyfishing instructor.

This article has been reprinted from the Chattahoochee Chapter newsletter

Troutlines.



What Do Forest Plans Decide?

If you have attended a chapter meeting in the last several months, the term "forest plan" has floated around the room more than a few times. The process can cause some confusion if you are not familiar with it. The following was submitted by Doug Adams and hopefully it will shed some light on the "forest plan."

A good analogy for the level of decisions the forest plan makes would be a local zoning plan for your hometown. A zoning plan will give general direction for where certain activities can and can't take place, be they residential, commercial or industrial. A zoning plan designates an area as commercial, but it does not decide whether a site will be occupied by a restaurant or shoe store.

The same holds true for the Forest Plan. We will decide where certain activities should be allowed and where they will be prohibited. For instance, the plan would determine where recreational activities will be encouraged. The Forest Plan does not make project-level decisions, for example whether a campground or picnic area will occupy a recreational site. But it will decide and establish the following things:

- Overall management direction or theme for the Chattahoochee National Forest*
- Requirements that protect resources and provide for public health and safety*
- Description of how certain parts of the forest (management areas) contribute to overall forest goals*
- Suitability of lands for resource use and protection*
- Monitoring and evaluation needs*
- Areas available for mineral development*

If you want to become more actively involved in the forest planning process there is meeting that will be open to the public on June 12th. Call the Forest Service at 770-536-0541 for more details. Please call before you make a trip to Gainesville, things can change and I may not hear about it!

Get Those Feet Wet and Do Some Sampling

Monte Seehorn and company plan to go to Ellicott Rock to attempt a quantitative sample and he needs some volunteers to help. The plan is currently to meet at Burrells Ford at 9am on the June 24th. If the conditions are suitable the next day, the group will head toward Big Bend Falls or some location between Rock Gorge and Big Bend Falls to do a "run and gun" sample. The first day will be more critical if you can come for only one day.

June

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

July

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

June 7th, Saturday- Kid's Fishing Rodeo at Tallulah River.

June 12th, Thursday- IDT meeting on Forest Plan, Supervisors Office, Gainesville, GA

June 17th, Tuesday. Regular monthly meeting at Rock House in Clayton.

June 20-21, Friday and Saturday. Campout and fishing trip to Robbinsville, NC.

June 24th, Tuesday - Sampling on the Chattooga River

July 15th - The specifics of *River Care 2000* will be presented by Jeff Durniak. This is a comprehensive program that will be managed by GA DNR involving an acquisition program, easements, etc.

July 12th, Saturday - Georgia TU Council Meeting.

July 19th, Saturday - Fishing for Chattooga Red Eye

Rabun Chapter of Trout Unlimited



Oct Call - Marcus for Program in Oct 21ST
(Check on Rock House)

MR DOUG ADAMS
P.O. BOX 65
RABUN GAP, GA 30568

Nov DOC on Alaska Trip