



## **Cheoah River Online Flow Study Report**

By: Kevin Colburn  
National Stewardship Director  
American Whitewater

June 16, 2006

In May of this year, 234 whitewater Cheoah River paddlers filled out an online survey which was posted on the American Whitewater website and the Boatertalk message board. The survey was hosted on [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). The survey focused on flows, access, management, and other facets of paddlers' enjoyment of the Cheoah River. This study is intended to supplement the previous Controlled Whitewater Flow Study done during the relicensing process. With a much larger sample size, a much wider range of flows, and additional access information, this study should be given strong consideration in future management decisions. This study was not targeted at rafters, and we recognize the need to further supplement this study with additional information collected from the commercial rafting companies. The raw data results of this study are available upon request.

## **Results and Discussion**

It is clear from the survey that paddlers greatly enjoy the Cheoah River, and are appreciative of all the efforts by those involved with the relicensing. Almost everyone that participated in our survey would recommend the Cheoah River to others (Table 1). While visiting the Cheoah River paddlers felt very welcomed by the residents of Graham County, and had positive experiences interacting with USFS personnel. Paddlers appreciated the friendly attitudes and the flexibility in the management of the river.

**Table 1. At the optimum flows for standard and high challenge trips would you recommend this section to others?**

	Yes	No	Response Average
For a Standard Trip	200	8	1.04
For a High Challenge Trip	191	18	1.09

The vast majority of respondents prefer to paddle the Cheoah in hard-shelled kayaks (209), while fewer people prefer canoes (13), rafts (7) and inflatable kayaks (4). Most paddlers rated their own skill level as Class IV/V (120), Class V (53), or Class IV (47), while only 11 paddlers rated their skill level as Class III/IV and 2 rated themselves as class III paddlers. Paddlers came primarily from the southeastern states, but a significant number did hail from outside of the region. Surveyed paddlers experienced a wide range of the spring release season as is depicted in Table 2.

**Table 2. Indicate the dates that you ran the Cheoah River**

SAT	17 SEPT 2005	1500 cfs	95
SAT	1 OCT 2005	1150 cfs	73
SUN	2 NOV 2005	1080 cfs	57
WED	8 FEB 2006	600-1000 cfs	28
THU	9 FEB 2006	400 cfs	8
TUE	21 MAR 2006	1200 cfs	28
WED	22 MAR 2006	750 cfs	11
SAT	1 APR 2006	900 cfs	45
SUN	2 APR 2006	1190 cfs	32
SAT	8 APR 2006	1300 cfs	76
SUN	9 APR 2006	1170 cfs	40
SAT	15 APR 2006	1230 cfs	64
SUN	16 APR 2006	1000 cfs	40

We will address issues relating to flow, access, and management independently in the following sections of this report. These results come from both specific and open-ended questions (Appendices 1-3).

### **Flow Related Comments and Results**

Table 3 depicts how paddlers rate individual flows based on their own experiences on the Cheoah River. A distinct trend can be seen showing increasing preference with increasing flows up to 1500cfs. Flows of 1400-1500cfs received the highest preference rating (6.52), and a flows in the range of 1200-1700cfs received generally high preference ratings over 6.0. Flow preference steeply declines at flows below 1000cfs.

**Table 3. Paddlers Rating of Individual Flows (response average is on a 1-7 scale where 1 is Totally Unacceptable and 7 is Totally Acceptable).**

<i>Flow</i>	<i>Totally Unacceptable</i>	<i>Moderately Unacceptable</i>	<i>Slightly Unacceptable</i>	<i>Slightly Marginal</i>	<i>Moderately Acceptable</i>	<i>Totally Acceptable</i>	<i>Response Average</i>
400	89	9	7	6	2	3	1.58
500	84	9	7	7	4	3	1.68
600	64	20	11	10	4	4	2.13
700	51	18	16	14	9	10	2.66
800	22	24	20	21	15	15	3.51
900	12	10	23	30	23	20	4.34
1000	3	5	8	26	26	37	5.52
1100	3	2	3	13	30	41	5.88
1200	2	2	0	6	17	43	6.31
1300	2	0	0	4	10	37	6.48
1400	1	1	2	2	5	27	6.52
1500	2	2	2	1	9	24	6.52
1600	3	1	1	4	13	18	6.3
1700	3	2	1	10	9	15	6.1
1800	5	2	6	10	9	16	5.79
1900	7	4	5	11	10	17	5.55
2000	9	5	4	12	9	16	5.41

In addition to rating a range of flows, paddlers were asked to specify flows for desired experiences. The mean minimum acceptable flow was 934cfs, the mean flow for a standard whitewater trip was 1225cfs, the mean flow for a low water technical trip was 870cfs, and the mean flow for a high challenge trip was 1844. The mean preference of respondents for a single optimal release on the Cheoah River was 1418 cfs. These numbers correspond with the Table 3, which adequately represents variance around these means.

Open-ended questions regarding flow and management of flows drew several comments from paddlers. One or more respondents indicated the following preferences:

- Additional releases
- Releases in the summer and fall

- Higher releases than are currently targeted, while some (fewer) do prefer existing levels.
- A variety of release levels, including at least several releases in the 1500cfs range.
- Higher releases because they are safer.
- Higher releases (1500) because they would have a national draw, while flows in the 1000-1200 range have a regional draw, and flows under 1000 will have a local draw.
- Higher flows in association with instream vegetation removal.
- Earlier releases to allow for earlier put on times.
- Releases of the targeted flow (unlike most of the 2005-2006 releases)
- Up to date and accurate flow information at the put in.

These comments offer significant guidance in how to improve the recreational experience on the Cheoah River. As biological monitoring progresses, the goal of a more variable flow regime that includes some higher volume flows and seasonal variation can be considered. In the interim, earlier release times, additional vegetation removal, accurately meeting flow targets, and improved flow information can be considered.

### **Access Related Comments and Results**

Access to the Cheoah remains a work in progress. This survey sought to characterize paddlers' opinions on existing river access and future opportunities. When asked where they prefer to put in, most paddlers prefer the area near the planned USFS put in near the dam, or the area near Jo Anne's store. Table 4 shows these preferences as well as a desire to use additional pull-outs along highway 129.

**Table 4. Where is your preferred put in location?**

Along Joyce Kilmer Road above the first ledge	53
Along Joyce Kilmer Road below the first ledge	9
Jo Anne's Store	66
Private lot across from Jo Anne's Store	55
Unmarked Pull-outs along 129 after initial hard rapids	8
Unmarked Pull-outs just above Bear Creek Falls near USFS bridge	2
Other (please specify)	11

Most paddlers prefer to finish their Cheoah River paddling trips at the confluence of Calderwood Reservoir. Most paddlers prefer the official take out on river right, however a large percentage also prefer the river left option (Table 5.)

**Table 5. Where is your preferred take out location?**

Unmarked Pull-outs along 129 after initial hard rapids	0
Unmarked pull-outs just above Bear Creek Falls near USFS bridge	1
Tapoco Lodge	3
River left at reservoir confluence	80
Formal take out on right along reservoir	119
Other (please specify)	4

We were curious what paddlers are willing to pay for a Cheoah River shuttle. It appears clear that demand would support a shuttle price of \$2-\$5, but no higher.

**What is the highest price you would regularly pay for an efficient shuttle from the take out at Calderwood reservoir back to the access areas under construction below Santeetlah Dam (ie the put in)?**

\$1	13	\$4	9	\$7	8	\$10	10	\$13	1
\$2	26	\$5	78	\$8	4	\$11	1	\$14	0
\$3	39	\$6	1	\$9	0	\$12	0	\$15	1

Open-ended questions solicited a large number of informative responses regarding river access. Comments generally indicated that additional access areas are needed and that there is a preference for less active management (ie no mandatory shuttles). The current plan of a large put-in near the dam, distributed access areas along the river, and a small take-out only partially address the comments made by paddlers. Specifically:

- The large put-in that is planned will likely receive significant use, however alternative sites near Jo Anne's Store are preferred by a large number of paddlers.
- Access areas along Highway 129 are important assets for the few paddlers seeking shorter runs of specific characteristics (ie harder or easier sections), however these areas will receive relatively little use compared with the uppermost and lowermost access areas.
- Paddlers express a strong desire to take out at Calderwood Reservoir, on either side, and many prefer to run their own shuttles. Current plans of a small take-out with minimal parking do not meet this demand. Shuttles, if priced appropriately, will somewhat offset this disconnect.

The survey has suggested several opportunities to improve paddling access on the Cheoah River. Access solutions that increase parking in the vicinity of Calderwood Reservoir would be highly desirable to the paddling community. A short trail from the reservoir to river left parking would be helpful and was requested by one respondent. Shuttle services that offer prompt and reliable service on release days at a price in the 2-5 dollar range would also meet the interests of many paddlers. Paddlers also desire it to be legal to pull off of highway 129 at all existing pull-out locations. By allowing this, river access can be dispersed, at least until formal access areas are constructed.

User fees were also mentioned repeatedly in the open-ended questions. Several comments indicated that the user fees were acceptable, and some indicated they were unacceptable. Several respondents suggested fees were acceptable only if they specifically paid for construction of paddling access areas.

### **Additional Management Comments and Results**

In the open-ended questions paddlers noted several ideas regarding management of the Cheoah that are not exactly flow or access related but are worth mentioning and considering.

Brush in the channel came up many times as a factor negatively affecting safety, aesthetics, and enjoyment of the Cheoah River. While the first season of recreational use proved that it is possible to navigate the Cheoah River in its current condition, the brush in the channel remains a negative characteristic of the river. Respondents noted that removal of brush/trees would create more eddies and shore access and thereby enhance safety on the river. It would also reduce possibilities of pins and entrapments on standing trees. We feel that it is worth considering additional selective removal of shrubs and trees from the riverbed. Sixty-three respondents offered to help with site stewardship like vegetation management, 20 in a leadership capacity. We have these people's contact information and would be happy to share it directly with the USFS river manager.

Several respondents asked that future releases be scheduled to not conflict with Tallulah River releases (1<sup>st</sup> 2 weekends in April and 1<sup>st</sup> 3 weekends in November). This consideration would benefit the paddling community by providing additional weekend boating opportunities. It would also increase the return on the investment in river management and flow provision on both rivers. However, distributing use across the two rivers does reduce some management burdens on both. We feel that releases should be scheduled to not conflict with Tallulah whenever possible, but not as a rule.

It was requested that paddlers be better informed of the release schedule, shuttle information, wrist band information, and instream flows. This request can be met through coordination between AW and the USFS, and through development of onsite signage at new access areas.

Respondents appreciated the portable toilet facilities provided at the put in, however at least one suggested a jiffy-john be placed midway down the run.

A few respondents voiced concerns about commercial rafting on the river, specifically requesting that rafting be limited. Their justifications were primarily safety related given the continuous nature of the river with few eddies. These concerns are common to many rivers, but are exacerbated on the Cheoah by the trees and shrubs. We see no inherent conflict between private boating and commercial boating on this river,

and are certain that the outfitters, the USFS, and AW can work together to create a safe arena for both uses.

Respondents suggested several off-river improvements. Several desired more low-cost camping opportunities in the area and a place for paddlers to hang out after paddling. Many towns and rivers have meeting and camping locations that paddlers frequent, however no such patterns have yet developed on the Cheoah. Also suggested was a guide to non-paddling related activities in the area, possibly as a map created by Graham County highlighting trails, swimming areas, etc.

At least one respondent expressed concern that paddlers of insufficient skill levels tackled the Cheoah this spring. It is clear that better information in books, on websites, and at access areas can help better define the difficulty of the Cheoah, but none of these methods is as important as peer to peer communication. We anticipate that as more paddlers run the Cheoah, the level of knowledge regarding the run will significantly increase. Ultimately the decision to paddle or not paddle a river is up to the individual. Managers should continue to stress personal and group responsibility.

At least one respondent noted a concern regarding the release of water at night.

Several respondents noted that they appreciate the USFS being flexible and adaptable in the management of the Cheoah. USFS onsite personnel were described as great, friendly and helpful, and paddlers appreciated this. Several respondents also shared comments regarding the friendly and open nature of the non-boating local community, and that they felt welcome. At least one noted that they intentionally spent money while in Graham County.

Many, many respondents voiced their opinion that the Cheoah is an excellent whitewater river – a classic. Respondents offered significant advice on how to better manage the river, but many also noted that they had a great time on the river and that the USFS is doing a good job of managing the river.

### **Conclusion**

Paddlers greatly enjoy the Cheoah River. This enjoyment could be enhanced by improving the flow regime, public access, and information associated with the river. We hope that this survey can act as a preliminary blueprint for future river management goals and objectives. Based on new information and a larger sample size, this study suggests that the previous flow study may not represent current recreational use preferences on the Cheoah. This information should be integrated with similar information collected from commercial guides and customers in subsequent years, and used to make the Cheoah the best river it can be – both recreationally and ecologically.

**Appendix 1. Answers to the open question: “What, if any, changes to the management of the Cheoah River (ie flows, access, shuttles, fees, etc) could cause you to paddle the Cheoah River more often in the future?”**

- More Releases, the more I paddle it. Summer Releases would be great.
- I'll go to the Cheoah anytime I know the flows are likely to be in the 1,300 cfs range. It would be great if Cheoah releases didn't overlap with Tallulah releases, and more release during the middle of summer would be nice.
- The occasional 'wicked high' release would be cool as hell. But a deal's a deal, so I understand that probably won't happen.
- Some party atmosphere afterward would be good. Tapoco Lodge?
- Cut out more brush in the river.
- higher flows
- Open access- free parking, no required shuttle, no purchasing of wristbands, etc.
- I think it should have a less random schedule. I also think that they should not waste water at night between releases, if they don't waste water, they could give us higher releases.
- I really don't know what the fee system is since the first weekend. I was not willing to pay \$16 to paddle and luckily we were allowed to do our own thing shuttlewise and not have to buy any bands. I would rather catch it at high water natural flow for free than have to pay for a low release.
- more water.
- There was no information on the shuttle. I saw a bus once the whole day I was there. It was unclear where you could get a shuttle and where it would stop. There needs to be better onsite information on how the shuttle works. The whole wrist band system was unclear too. I only knew about it because others in my group told me we had to purchase them. There were no signs or information explaining what the wrist band was for or what the fees went to.
- More water would make me come to Cheoah more often. Low water bang-scrape rivers are a dime a dozen in the southeast. Fluffy continuous rivers like Cheoah at higher water are truly a unique resource that I would go out of my way to run.
- Do not release on same weekends as Tallulah.
- Standard flows in the 1000-1300cfs range, nothing lower.
- The main thing I've seen that could be better managed is that the actual release levels should more closely match the scheduled release levels. There is a significant difference in difficulty between 850 cfs and 1200 cfs, and a higher release level on a scheduled low release day as we have seen a few times could be a safety issue because the lower release levels will tend to attract less-experienced boaters.
- More flow and less choads who don't know how to paddle that I have to pull out of the river every time...All three times I have been involved in at least four rescues of people not associated with my group. Not that this is a big problem just a little annoying. I don't like being the guy who won't help but I also like to try and get in a few laps but have yet to be successful.



- More releases. Have spoken with local business people who said paddlers have increased their business dramatically and are pleased with the releases. Would like to have more releases during summer and throughout the year.
- Improve some access, really not into the shuttle idea (paying for), although a setup similar to Tallulah would be awesome. No problem w/purchasing wristbands.
- Do away with all the great help everyone is providing. Turn the water on, tell the Dam operator, rangers, rescue squad, and the AW poser to go home and visit with their families or get in a boat and run the river so they can learn how all those people who are involved but don't boat really just get in the way. We've got by for years and years without your help on natural river and the Cheoah ain't no different, if we need you we'll call
- Higher, more dependable release levels.
- Not much- this river's an instant classic! I'd walk thru brambles to get to it!
- Flows of at least 1000 cfs.
- More summer releases would be nice. I prefer creeking to playboating on the Ocoee. Any help in keeping me off the Ocoee would be nice!
- Higher flows.... occasionally
- A paddler's 'hang-out' or big field to camp in.
- If the 1500cfs flow is enacted then I will paddle the Cheoah at every release; there would be no reason to go anywhere else.
- More releases in the summer when no rivers are running would bring more people there
- IF we can be assured that the scheduled release amount is actually what will be released or if it is higher then we would be more likely to drive the 3 hours.
- More high flow releases, 1500 cfs or more.
- More releases and better facilities
- Being able to run shuttle with my friends would be good. The price of parking and paddling was a little steep compared to what we normally pay to paddle. It's a hard pill to swallow when you haven't really had to pay much before. The access and forest service presence seems a little excessive and a little heavy handed.
- Check natural flows and adjust releases so they meet their target.
- User fees for paddlers only in Nantahala Nat'l Forest are discriminatory. The elimination of user fees on the Cheoah would encourage me to paddle there more often.
- Free beer.
- Flows between 1000 and 1500 cfs. No river use fee and low or no parking fee for public parking areas (ie public land).
- More releases!!! (at the higher levels 1300+)
- Higher water!!!!
- Clean out the trees and their stumps! Don't build a parking lot up in the flat water. The trail up to Yellow Creek Falls needs to be upgraded and signed. It will provide an additional recreational activity when people attend releases, especially for non-boating members of a party. I would like to see the trail extended up to the Yellow Creek put-in so you could run the creek and walk the shuttle.

- Having some type of natural path made for the take-out under the bridge (river/confluence left) would be nice. Eliminate all the parking/shuttle requirements, open up all the pull-outs, and restore free access to and from the river put-in and take out.
- Even out the release days between Fall and Spring. Keep releases on the weekends.
- Setting up our own shuttle would be nice, and not having to pay for anything, unless someone was running a reasonable shuttle at a reasonable price. (the same price it would cost us, but we wouldn't have to do it)
- No required fees
- Discontinue wristband fees. Predictable flows, higher flows (at or above 1500 cfs). Restriction on # of rafts per day.
- The most important thing would be to release the scheduled amount of water so people know what to expect. I would recommend this be a Fall river release after people have warmed up with a good season on the Ocoee, rather than a Spring release with unknown Winter paddling.
- Regular, scheduled releases at a solid 1000 cfs +
- More weekend releases in the fall. Having week day releases really limits out of town boaters from using the river
- More flows, Gaven and Kenzie old enough to paddle it with me!
- More water. The park rangers and everyone involved have been terrific. I hope we can bring something good to their community.
- I think the USFS has done a great job of taking the experiences from the fall and winter and evolving them into a useful management system. Their flexibility and support has been noticed and appreciated.
- More releases at 1000+cfs
- More releases on the weekends. I would be there almost ever weekend.
- Take out some or all of that wood
- Don't run it while the Tallulah is also running, or on the days that they run the Cascades (future).
- Higher flows
- Scheduled high flow of 1500 cfs
- Completion of Forest Service access points, shuttles (the past three weekends I didn't know a shuttle was running), some releases during the summer months (July, August, September). I know summer releases aren't probable, but I can hope!
- If the flows were more accurately scheduled. One time we got there and had to wait an hour and 45 minutes for the water to get turned on, after it's scheduled time it was supposed to be released.
- More release dates
- More summer releases. Base flow of 1200cfs+
- RELIABLE ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE WATER LEVEL ARE IMPORTANT.
- More regular flows, such as 1000 cfs to 1300 cfs
- Do not make such a production of opening the river. Just schedule the release and cfs, have a parking area next to the river and we will paddle the river.

- Higher releases (1300 - 2000 cfs)
- Having: -More overall releases -More Summer releases -Having some 'high water challenge' releases -Being able to put-in and take-out were ever I choose
- -Increased release dates at high flows. -A 'wet' county or bars in Robbinsville.
- More dependable flow...in other words knowing what the level will be on specific days. I don't want to drive from Alabama with my OC1 expecting one level and in reality getting something different.
- Free parking
- You guys are doing great. I think ya'll are getting that boaters like to be self reliant and can handle a lot of the rescues that come up.
- More weekend flows in the summer. More flows above 1000. More free time/less work.
- Higher flows, ease of access
- Higher flows than those scheduled.
- More weekend releases! More releases of 1000 or more!
- Fees are ok for a specific goal, parking. But, once the USFS has their greedy paws on the fee dollars they never let up. Look at the Nantahala. All the fees I have paid over the last five years have mostly gone to pull-offs and picnic areas for Florida people driving through the gorge and not benefiting kayakers.
- I'd like to see more high flow days.
- Make parking more accessible and do not require public shuttles.
- Zero access fees
- I would paddle the Cheoah more often if the flow were higher says 2000cfs. Because even at 1500 only the very bottom section provided a good class IV+ challenge. With more water this could become the new Gauley, and I'm certain rafting companies would be happy to paddle at higher flows.
- Flows more regulated. Release close to what is proposed so I can make an informed decision.
- Less rescue and officials. At the first release, which we were told be could not paddle and went home, you would have thought the President was paddling with us. It was much better 2nd release, but we would wish to see as few officials as possible so we can enjoy the river.
- More frequent flows.
- So far I have no issues. And Thank you for getting us access to such a gem of a river!!!!!!
- I don't mind paying for wristbands if they are \$1-2 per day. I don't mind paying for a reliable shuttle (every 10-15 minutes) at a cost of \$2-3 per trip. The shuttles need to be reliable and relatively quick. No one wants to stand around waiting. Coming from Knoxville, Tennessee I could park at the takeout and take a shuttle to the put in. Overall, we would need parking at the takeout and putin for folks coming from both directions.
- Hot tubs, massages, just kidding..... Good access and reliable flow is all I need. And if I can manage to stay out of the poison ivy that would be great.
- Maintaining free and adequate parking AT the takeout and AT various putin's is very attractive. We prefer to run our own shuttle. The \$2 wristband fee is OK if it helps maintain a variety free parking areas.

- We have set our own shuttle in the past. On a high use day I could see a need for a shuttle, but on the day we did it setting our own seemed fine. Love the river, wish it has more flow days. It's my new favorite SE dam served run!!!
- Better shuttles
- I think that after the lots are built, the wristband should not be required at all, since that is what they are supposed to be for. Flow must be higher if we expect boaters to remain happy with it. Raft companies will learn the lines, they have done big water stuff before (Gauley, New, Ottawa, and many others.) Don't involve NOC, they are very beauracratic, even if they are a good company.
- I would like to see the releases be close to what is projected on each day. I go prepared for just about anything and so far that is what I have gotten. Still waiting for a good parking area on Joyce Kilmer Road. Keep free camping in the area.
- Lower fees, better put in and take out access/parking, more releases.
- Minimum release flow should be 1300 cfs or greater in my opinion. Maybe as much as 1500 cfs.
- I'm tremendously grateful for opportunity to paddle both Tallulah and the Cheoah. Thank you AW! But why the overlapping release days? I'd also be interested in seeing the use numbers on weekday release.
- Hit the desired (published) flow release.
- Higher release levels
- If it ran more I would run it more!
- More release days in summertime! Also, the same people who paddle the Cheoah also paddle the Tallulah; so when they release on the same days it makes us choose between them. Would rather have them release on different days.
- A flow of 950 would be a nice option for me and my open boat. There are times when I just do not feel up to the required effort to safely and successfully negotiate the Cheoah at 1100 - 1300. 2. An increase in frequency of releases would certainly open up more options for me. Understand that this is not a complaint, just a change that would give me more opportunities to get on the river. 3. Access so far has not been an issue for me, however, if more convenient access were to be provided, it would certainly make the experience even better. 4. Generally speaking, I am with a group that would prefer to run their own shuttle. The one time I did use the NOC Shuttle Service, we arrived at the takeout just as the bus was pulling out and as a result, we had about a 50 minute wait for its return. If we have our own shuttle, that would not be the case. Of course, it could be that our timing was simply the worst it could possibly have been on that occasion.
- Traveling from Pgh. Pa., it would be nice if there were more sat. Sun. releases combined with something else (possibly another release) to paddle in the area!
- Just the parking issue, other than that everything is great!
- Less midweek, winter releases and more summer releases (midweek or weekend) or weekend, winter releases
- I don't mind paying for a wristband but to be intimidated into paying for parking, shuttle, putin, etc seemed somewhat of a slippery slope type of situation to use a public and natural resource when plenty of USFS property is available for use alongside the river.

- More weekend releases
- Paying for parking is okay. Paying to use the River (wrist bands) is NOT!
- Some more clean-out of the brush, and more reliable flows.
- \*More weekday releases \*more efficient use of the water - not running all night  
\*better control of the total flow \*starting on time at the right flow \*more summer dates \*fewer winter dates and more fall dates
- I loved the run and had a very good time. I live about two hours from there so I plan to paddle it whenever it is releasing as long as it no longer conflicts with Tallulah.
- More high water releases (flows greater than or equal to 1200 CFS).
- Cut out more wood. Also need to cut out brush 'level' with soil. Had multiple paddlers get hung up on brush stumps sticking ABOVE water level ( 2-5inches)
- Sticking to the release days (not switching), without informing the paddlers with a sign or whatever. Would be nice if Alco could figure out how to accurately release water. The visual/internet? Gauge is difficult to get a handle on in its present location. It's a sloshing, wavy mess.
- Who gets the \$3 paid for access? What is it spent on?
- More week end releases I am 7 hours away so I am limited to when I could get on.
- I would like to see more releases especially during the summer months. Also, it would be better if the releases didn't coincide with the Tallulah Gorge releases in April and November.
- Higher flows
- Removal of the fees once the access locations are improved.
- The main thing that would get me to return regularly would be a brush free channel and higher flows. The lower two miles were brush free, but the upper section was disturbingly brushy, significantly diminishing the enjoyability of floating the river and significantly increasing the danger factor and the difficulty of navigation. The low water and brush made for a very bony and technical trip!
- As little management, the better, especially when access points are constructed. Also, phase out the wristbands once these amenities are constructed. Stabilize the flows so boaters know what to expect before making the drive and being disappointed (low) or overwhelmed (high).
- 1. Can we schedule when it does not conflict with Tallulah releases? 2. More summer weekends so I can bring my entire family. I paddle one day and we hike/camp for two days.
- Fewer days in the middle of the week. Two days in a row, instead of one.
- More camping access please! Private or public is fine.
- A minimum 1500cfs fewer police fewer people wearing jeans holding throwbags on the shore
- More releases on warmer weather days, and less in the colder months. Given the choice, I'll run a natural flow river closer to home rather than the Cheoah.
- I would like to see some of the brush cleared. I have not kept up with it much, but I would definitely be willing to help clean some of it up. I have helped get a boat from being hung in some trees. The paddler was ok, but I don't think he will be there to do it again any time soon. He flipped over above some brush, missed his

role twice, when he finally got back around, he was in some in a very bad spot. He got out, but the boat had to fill with water and with the current, it finally broke free.

- Just larger releases and no access fee for the river. I think it's not right we have to pay for access to sites that other user groups; anglers, tubers, sun bathers.
- More summertime weekend releases
- Clarification on the wristband issue would be nice (fines, etc if not wearing a wristband). Paddlers, in general, do not like to pay to paddle a river.
- I live in Auburn Alabama and the Cheoah is a 5 hr drive. If the flows increased in CFS I would make the journey more often.
- Reliable info regarding river flows

**Appendix 2: Answers to the question: “Please provide any additional comments, thoughts, or useful information on recreational opportunities on either the Cheoah River that have not otherwise been addressed as part of this survey.”**

- Things seem to be working well at Cheoah now. The access is acceptable and the flows have been excellent levels. I would say that at this point it might be best to leave things the way they are. Flows in the 1,300 range have made it an excellent season. I hope that no one starts lobbying for lower flows or more 'management.' In short, leave it alone for now.
- It is a 3 hour drive for me so; any volunteer work would not be possible for me, with my job. I tell everyone I know what a great run it is.
- Keep it going, we need more water, more release days, and less wasted water at night, other than that, keep up the good work AW!
- The Forest Service has done a great job with being flexible and adapting to the situation. This is greatly appreciated. Rather than forcing river users into a rigid system the Forest Service has shown a strong interest in learning how river users want to use the resource and adapting accordingly.
- Outstanding river ... probably my favorite in the SE. I greatly appreciate all of the efforts that have been made by all who have contributed to this effort.
- The Cheoah is spectacular at every level I have paddled it but 1200-1300 is the best. I love the hard work and effort you guys have put into this project and I know I'll be out there many more times. Thanks for everything
- Think I have already covered everything...oh yeah more water.
- You didn't put zero down as a choice for how many day we allowed ourselves to be extorted out of money for access or shuttle
- I live pretty far away (12 hours) but will rank it with an UY trip.
- Brush in riverbed needs to be controlled with an aquatic approved herbicide instead of bush axes which leave sharp stumps which could be hazardous.
- What is the water quality of the Cheoah??
- Really great river and I would like to see more and higher releases
- Coincide releases with next year cascade releases to accommodate people on all skill levels in a close geographic area and play that up media and merchandise wise for AW
- Fun River. Will probably make it a yearly trip.
- Great run! Much better than Tallulah
- The trail up to Yellow Creek Falls needs to be upgraded and signed. It is a pretty 20 footer whose viewing would provide an additional recreational activity when people attend releases, especially for non-boating members of a party. I would like to see the trail extended up to the Yellow Creek put-in so you could run the creek and walk the shuttle.
- There is a lack of camping spots near the Cheoah. Some additional primitive 'areas' would be a nice addition.
- Going out of country soon, or would consider #24.
- Wouldn't mind helping out with some data analysis as time permits...



- More information on river hazards or recommended routes would be nice.
- Thanks AW!!!!
- I think AW has done great job with the release of the Cheoah River. I appreciate everything they have done to secure water for boaters. I have made it a point to spend money in the community to show them the potential marketplace. Boaters will come spend money, rafters will come spend money. Just like the Nantahalla and Ocoee, Cheoah could be the next big thing!
- More spaces at the camp ground at the take out would be nice.
- Everybody has done a great job so far.
- This is a great run for us to have. The more the Cheoah runs, on days when other rivers are not, the more I will be on it.
- Glad to see the local interest, we need to keep them happy.
- I'd like to commend all (Forest Service, AW, NOC, etc.) for securing releases on this fun river!
- Put a porta potti in a couple of areas going down the river. One area with a graveled trail going from river to grassy parking area on side of road and maybe on at the big one.
- EVENTUALLY SOMEONE WILL WRITE A CHEOAH GUIDEBOOK...IT CAN'T HURT TO ENCOURAGE WRITERS TO DO THIS ASAP.
- I appreciate AW's effort to open the Cheoah for our use. My thought is that rivers do not belong solely to a company no matter what reasons these were given away in the past. Rivers brings life and beauty to a community and a region, and should not only be viewed as a means for profit.
- The Cheoah is a great river and having more 1200 cfs releases, particularly in the Summer, would allow a lot more people to enjoy the river and bring a big boost to the area.
- I like the fact that the locals are welcoming the boaters and are viewing this as a good thing. I've encountered several interactions with locals in the Ingles parking lot, at McDonalds and restaurants and they have all been very pleasant and made us feel welcome there. I also like the fact that I see locals offering parking lots and shuttles for a small fee. They aren't trying to gouge the paddlers and the paddlers are taking advantage of the opportunities presented. It's difficult to answer question 24 as I'm not sure what is involved with site stewardship.
- Would be happy to help, but it is \$30 of gas from where I live.
- I'll willing to work a weekend a year on brush clearing/maintenance.
- End fees!
- I'd love to see/discover more recreation opportunities in the Cheoah area for friends and family that don't paddle. The Chamber of Commerce should put together a promotion.
- Restriction on amount of Commercial Rafting Traffic. Its going to be interesting when NOC and the others getup to full speed with operations. They paid their dues with the work they provided for releases, but should not be allowed to overuse the resource because of greed. There are many tight, tricky, shrub ridden areas on the river that make it an awesome experience but throw in a lot of raft traffic and safety becomes an issue, for both private and commercial users. Maybe they can regulate the commercial traffic similar to the Chattooga, specific



put in times for the companies and require them to be at specific locations at certain times, to keep them moving. This could be posted so private boaters could better plan launch times. I refuse to paddle the Ocoee because of the overuse by commercial companies, even when everything else is real low. Would rather bang down the Noli at 400 CFS then deal with that circus at normal flows and I will feel the same way about the Cheoah.

- We need some more river clean-ups. I know plenty people who are willing to do more work, we just need some organization. It would be cool is AW stepped up here. NOC shouldn't really be the one to have to organize this.
- It is a great river and I am so glad we can paddle it.
- With the fun experiences on the 3 days mentioned, I will probably organize a club trip to the Cheoah in the future. (Three Rivers Paddling Club, Pittsburgh, PA.
- I would be happy to help clear out the channel, but I don't want to organize it
- The Cheoah is a great whitewater resource and has become one of my favorite rivers. If only we had this kind of cooperation from the Forest Service on the headwaters of the Chattooga. We will not give up the fight to paddle those sections.
- PLEASE GET RID OF THE TREES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE RIVER
- Thank you for the hard work
- Who ever thought about getting the port-o-johns- BRILLIANT! Thank you so much. Having a toilet at the put in at O'Henry's was a life saver!!!
- Regarding question 24, I did take an active part in site development by helping on an NOC sponsored brush / tree removal cleanout late in 2005. I would be interested in volunteering for more of the same type needs, assuming the scheduling is workable.
- The rangers and the locals are all very welcoming and nice. When my group comes to paddle the Cheoah we do not feel like we are offending anybody.
- The rangers we spoke with were very polite and helpful.
- Clear the channel brush.
- It is going to be one of the best WW resources in the area, once all the kinks get worked out.
- \*Avoid days where the temps are too low and chance of snow is too high
- Things seem to be working well now that NOC is out of the picture, and since shuttle service is no longer mandatory. The flows in the 1,200 range have been an excellent unexpected bonus. Boaters seem to be getting along well with the locals.
- Need more low \$\$ camping opportunities
- I think more releases are needed to help eliminate the smaller brush in the stream bed. Cutting this brush would not be an effective way to eliminate it as it would only grow back during dry or non release times. More access (pullovers & trails) would be nice for spectators and photography.
- Great run
- So far I've had very good experiences with the local Forest Service management in the area.
- Living so far away, regular work days would be difficult to pull off, but if I was within two or three hours, I would love to be involved in brush removal. This is still greatly needed.

- Thank you, USFS and FERC!
- Limit Commercial usage. Commercial Rafting does not belong on this river.
  - 1) There's no way that a raft, particularly one full of know-nothing customers can stop before running over a private boater, no way! A boater surfing in the middle of Land...thousand..Holes will be nothing more than a target. If I swim and get hurt, then it's my fault. If I'm blindsided and hurt by two tons of commercial incompetence, while surfing in a hole; I'll take legal remedy, seriously. In the real world nobody gets run over by another boater, repeatedly. A grievance committee, a little return the favor, or an asswhipping would take place. So why should rafting companies be any different? If they cannot eddy-out, eddy-hop, ferry from side-to-side, and wait their turn like everybody else; then why should they be allowed to endanger the lives of unsuspecting competent river users.
  - 2) If the reason private boaters are being asked to pay is because of congestion, then increasing usage from commercial rafting will exponentially increase traffic/congestion along Hwy 143.
  - 3) End of natural setting and destruction of environment. Take a trip down a disaster area line the Ocoee, oh well. Take a trip down the Nantahala, what a shame. On a gem like the Cheoah (JoyceKilmer/SlickRock), an unforgivable travesty.
  - 4) Commercial rafting companies have a negative effect on river usage due to their unnatural mode and patterns of travel. The more trips down, the more profit. The quicker the trip, the more profit. The larger the raft, the more profit. The less experienced the guide, the more profit. The fewer the safety boaters, the more profit. The straighter line through, the more the profit. The more people to a raft, the more the profit. The larger the number of rafts in a trip, the more the profit. No one else on the river, except perhaps a wildwater racer operates in such a manner. All of this adds up to increasing the odds that a private boater will get hurt.
  - 5) Raft companies operate on the premise that they have right of way, because they are in larger less manageable crafts. This means they go, and everyone else gets out of the way. That you should look out for them, instead of them looking out for you. If you are in a hole doing 360's, you can't see them. They take you out, a big laugh, and let's go do it again. I have been paddling over 25 years. Have been on two US whitewater rodeo teams. Have won many a National Open Canoe Slalom race, and taken a few North American Slalom titles. Still paddle over a hundred days a year on Class III to V whitewater (120+). And being run over and then under a raft piloted by commercial guide who thought he had right-of-way, is about as close to a life threatening situation as I've had.
- Local paddlers would be the choice for river site stewardship.
- Seems like a tubing operation could exist from the put in below the dam to just above the first ledge. That would be nasty to swim at normal flows. Possibly from below first ledge to above Wilma's ledge too, but at low flows if smaller releases happen.

- **Appendix 3: “Do you have any general comments on flows that you feel have not been addressed in the questions we've asked? Specifically if you do not have a good record of flows or dates from when you have run the river, please include any qualitative observations on flows needs.”**

#### Open-Ended Response

- If more trees were removed I would willing to boat higher CFS.
- Less than 1300 is really not worth making the trip. Between 1300 to 1500 is incredible and well worth it.
- I've run it in the 1000-1500 range now 4-5 times. I like it tons. Will likely be a 2-3x/year sort of 'user' of the Cheoah, coming from Asheville. Normally like 'harder' stuff, but have had a gas out there. AW rocks! Keep up the good work.
- I don't have any problem with any flow 1200-1500, but for safety concerns, many more trees and brush need to be removed. (Especially for less experienced paddlers and rafts) It is one of my favorite rivers. The people around there are friendly and seem to embrace the paddling community.
- Cheoah rocks! Glad to be a part of its rebirth, and happy its close. I really like the locals too, they are nice. Mike
- The figures I put for higher flows are just speculative. 1300 (two weekends ago on Saturday) was good, but more water would have been better. Everyone I talked to said that the 1500 weekend was a blast. The Sunday release seemed too low for my tastes. I think it is more fun as a higher flow river. Everything stays about the same (the lines don't change all that much), but the waves get bigger and the run gets more fun, not really more difficult. I would like to see some weekends with 2000 flows on one day and 1500 on another. Peace, Eli
- Three different styles of trip are identified: technical, standard, and high challenge. This is a great run for standard trips and high challenge trips but not for technical trips. Other runs in the area are much better suited for technical trips. The character of the Cheoah river bed is unique to the region: the features that make it a great highwater run make it hazardous at technical (i.e. lower) flows. To provide a unique regional whitewater experience that is safe and enjoyable recreational opportunities should be managed for standard flow trips.
- I believe the write up on AW is a little off. It states that the more flow the bigger and munchier holes start to get. This is true for the middle and lower however, for the upper, I found most holes are stickier and sneak up on a boater in the 800-900 range.
- I liked approx. 1800 cfs WAY more than the lower levels I have done. I don't think there is any reason to release less than 1000, and the higher release should be more in the 1400+ range. I think varying the flows is important to allow more boaters of various skill levels to enjoy the river, but lower than 1000 it is just too bangy and loses the qualities that make the Cheoah unique in this area. Feel free to contact me through <http://www.nccreeks.com/> for more info.
- Good stuff, good work

- I ran it the first time it was released handpaddling my smallest playboat and had a blast at that level...1500cfs and it was an awesome run. I came back on the third release and found it to be a little bony and low for my preferences especially in a Slick Stick. The last time I paddled was a Saturday that it totally poured the night before so I think the level was back up around 1500ish and it was great, everybody else I know loves it at that level and say anything less is to bony. Keep up the high water I don't think anything under 1200 should even be considered a safe release level. At that level and above things start to pad out and more and more lines open up. Holes are a little bit bigger but easily avoidable but at the same time at that much more excitement to the run.
- Only run it twice, not really sure how to answer question 13. Would have to see it @ higher water.
- Higher the water the more swims, the more swims the warmer the weather should be. Please don't get this get screwed up like the Tallulah and the Ocoee rodeo became.
- Haven't done enough different flows to be accurate. I liked the 1000 cfs- less pushy, still challenging.
- Great run, thanks for all your hard work in getting water back into this river.
- The 1600 cfs flow was a lot of continuous read and run boogie water. A whole lot of fun. The 1000 cfs flow made for a much slower day and was sort of a let down...excepting the last 2 miles, which is entertaining at just about any level. Maybe we should have several high release days during the year. Instead of releasing two days at 1000 and 600 just have one release at 1600. It's the same amount of water. The Cheoah is a great river and its great to see it flow again at any level. It just really picks up with more flow. Keep up the good work AW.
- Have scheduled and consistent flow times (time water turns on/off) rather than just dates and having the river run at non boatable times (night).
- High flows are guesses. 900 was definitely too low for my taste. 1300 was a lot of fun but could have definitely been a good bit higher without being inordinately dangerous to a class V boater.
- Acceptable isn't the right word for this survey. I won't drive from TN again unless it has higher flow. I think people will get more used to the run and rapids over time, so the higher flows will become 'acceptable' to more people once they have done the run 3 times. I ran it lower on the Wed of November 2005 - still had fun. Clay Wright
- The first release at 1500cfs was optimal- it created a river that is unlike anything else in the SE. The river had a true western feel to it and things were padded out much better. I think that 1500cfs should be the Saturday standard, and Sunday should be 1200cfs.
- The higher the better up to like 2000 I think because people that should not be on at that level might get hurt...But you should do a day at 900 then a day at 1600 or more...and make sure people know which days are which
- I was involved in the test releases. The levels were OK but felt like the river needed more juice. The 1500 release last fall was great, really brought out the character of the river. Would be nice to have a few days a year of flows in the 1500 to 2200 level.

- Low flows with distinct sections for people stepping up with put ins and take outs for each section
- I have run the river many times in the past before the scheduled releases. I think that as far as a entertaining run the higher the better. I realize that I am in the higher skill level but the questions seemed to be personally addressed. I think most people can handle the run quite well at 1800 and it made for better rafting because there was more water and better lines. I was also a raft guide for more than 20 years.
- At 1300 it was way tougher than I expected. I took out early, just above the waterfall.
- The trees appear to be adequately cleared in the rapids. However, bailing open boats is strenuous due to the volume of shrubbage along the river.
- 1000 cfs was getting low for many of the rapids where the river is wide. Lower flows would further degrade the quality of the run in these sections. 2000 cfs offers big water features and more powerful hydraulics which many will likely find very challenging
- Even though I have not made any of the lower runs, I have already several mention that 1000 and less may not be worth the trip. However at the few number of levels I've run at, it was excellent. From my little experience and from hearing others talk, 1300-1500 sounds like the optimal release.
- I have not personally paddled the Cheoah at higher flows but I have paddled rivers similar in size and gradient with that much water. I believe at the higher flows, 2000+, the Cheoah would be a true Class 4-5 big water experience, something that is rare in the Southeastern United States. I think if some rec. releases were in this range, it would attract many boaters that pass on the Cheoah because it is a class 3-4 run. I also believe that 2000+ cfs would not be too high for a reasonable level. The Cheoah often runs at these flows during the winter and spring during rains, though I have not been lucky enough to catch it. The higher flows would scare some people away from the river, but as mentioned previously it would attract many more. A few high releases would definitely make me return to the Cheoah more often than the 1000 cfs release (the thousand is still fun though).
- Many more trees need to be removed, including the stumps. The conditions at present are unpleasant and dangerous.
- I have only run river twice and both were at virtually same flow, 1180 cfs. So no experience with variations. Think river can handle from half to twice the flow I ran, ie 600 to 2400 cfs range. But the 1180 cfs rate I ran was quite fun and challenging, while allowing virtually all holes to be punchable.
- The first day was SO AWESOME! It was flowing at a great level, and I really enjoyed it. This river is not meant to be run 'technically', it has a river bed for big water...so that's what it should run at. I really like the first day because I was not constantly rubbing over rocks the entire time. Boofs were everywhere and the trip was a ton of fun. I would love to see it flow at that same first level or higher all the time. Nonetheless, the flows that have been going on recently definitely need to be increased! Thanks so much. Sean.

- Yes. It has become very apparent in the boating community that the first release of 1500 cfs is the target that most boaters hope to see when they arrive to run the river. I can't think of a single person that experienced the first release that does not talk of it fondly. You hear a lot of 'Well, it's not first release!' when people ask about current levels. I also believe the first release saw more boaters on the water, and less injuries than lower level trips. I believe a level near 1500 or slightly above should prove to be what most experienced boaters will be hoping for.
- Would like much higher flows but would prefer to have the high flows on one day and a lower flow for less experienced paddlers on the other day (Similar to Tallulah.) I want everyone to have fun for sure... Thanks
- It's tough for me to answer some of this since I've only run it once.
- The lower the flow the farther down the river you can put in and still have a good trip. If the lower access points remain usable by boaters, you could have a fun technical trip as low as 400 cfs but most people wouldn't drive very far to paddle the river at that level. Given the overall characteristics of the river, it is a much better run for hard boats and rafts no lower than 1000.
- Thanks for the choices.
- Earlier release time.
- The wood hazards make the river unacceptably dangerous for higher flows. I don't think I would run again at 1200-1400 with all that wood in there.
- All three times that I paddled, it felt about the same, and the levels were not that different, so I don't think my participation is very helpful this time. I do look forward to running it at a lower level, because this river, at the level we paddled it, kicked a bunch of my friend's butts, and they are not far behind me in skill. I'd like to see the flow dates not conflict with other area flows, most notably the Tallulah. Finally, I am afraid of when the commercial guys start getting the rafts on here. Minimally, they need to clear out more trees.
- The rocks there eat boats, need water
- Really enjoyed the push and strength of slightly higher flows. Low flow was not challenging.
- AT 1150 SOME RAPIDS ARE SHALLOW AND BONEY. WE SAW MORE INJURIES AT 1150 THAN AT 1500, AND PADDLERS NEED TO BE AWARE THAT THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE WITHIN THIS 1150 - 1500 RANGE. PADDLERS WILL MAKE AN INFORMED DECISION ABOUT WHAT LEVEL THEY WILL PADDLE, OR WHERE TO PORTAGE. THE BONEY, TECHNICAL ENTRANCE TO BIG GUN, FOR EXAMPLE, STILL PUSHEY AT LOWER LEVELS, IS A RAPID SOME MAY PORTAGE AT LEVELS CLOSER TO 1150. AT 1500 THE VOLUME CUSHIONS MANY ROCKS FAIRLY WELL, SO WE SAW FEWER INJURIES. BUT I THINK WE SAW MORE SWIMS BECAUSE OF THE PUSHINESS AND SPEED. MOVING VERY FAST IN BIGGER WAVES MADE IT HARD TO ANTICIPATE HAZARDS, AND EDDIES WERE FEWER. FOR EXAMPLE, BIG GUN WAS A BIT EASIER AND REALLY SAFER TO SET-UP FOR AND RUN AT 1500, BUT THE NEXT STRETCH OF RAPIDS BELOW BIG GUN WERE MORE CHALLENGING. FATIGUE IS ALSO A FACTOR TO



INCLUDE IN GUIDELINES. AT BOTH LEVELS, WE WERE WORKING PRETTY HARD FOR LONGER STRETCHES THAN YOU FIND ON THE CHATTOOGA, TALLULAH GORGE, OR UPPER TELICO. BOATERS NEED TO BE CONSCIOUS OF THEIR LEVEL OF UPPER-BODY AEROBIC FITNESS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING BREAKS, AS THEY DECIDE WHAT TO PADDLE. AT BOTH 1150 AND 1500 LEVELS, PADDLERS NEED TO BE CONSCIOUS THAT ANXIETY WILL INCREASE THEIR FATIGUE.

- I have not paddled this river enough or with much variety in the release to be helpful. I was fine with the levels I have paddled so far.
- I made a point to not make the trip to the Cheoah unless the flow was at the very least 1200. The river gets way to boney at these lower flows.
- I have actively discussed flow levels with a cross section of skill level boaters and a large majority have most enjoyed levels from 1200-1500. What I found interesting is that less advanced / experienced class 4 boaters found the river challenging but quite manageable at 1500 CFS. From what I have heard 1500 CFS is the level most kayakers were excited about.
- The Cheoah is an incredible river. 1200 cfs would be the optimal normal release for the greatest number of people/skill levels to enjoy this run. A limited number of 2000 cfs 'high challenge releases' would be great too because they would bring many boaters and rafters from all over America to the area.
- I think the flows should be much higher than they are. Lines fill in more and become wider. Even though holes may become stickier they may be easy to avoid. I know it would only happen w/ a flood but I'd like to see a 5 or 6 g flow sometime. I've only run the river once at about 1100 and felt that it wouldn't have held my attn as much if I'd been in a creek boat. I'm not alone in this thought but I know the levels have to be lower to placate various skill levels. But, a really high release or two per year wouldn't be too hard give-up. Thanks
- I paddled the Cheoah in a tandem inflatable canoe. I normally paddle an OC1 and this is my preferred craft. I would not paddle the Cheoah at 1300 in my OC1 at this time. I would probably paddle it at 1000 or below in my OC1.
- I have a problem answering questions 9 - 14 for the reason that I don't know what other flows are like, so I can't say what best flow for these other 'types' of runs might be. For example: I've run the Upper Gauley as low as 210 cfs ... it was fun and everything was boatable, but I wouldn't drive out there for that level again (I live in Raleigh, NC). I would drive up to the UG for anything between 500 - 4000 cfs (all levels of which I've experienced). The river is totally different at all levels and you don't know what characteristic it will take on until you've seen the water level in that particular river. At what point the river changes due to amount of water in it varies with each river. Without that experience in that particular river, it's difficult to answer these questions.
- I don't have enough runs for specific levels but I love the variable flows. Don't make it the same old Ocoee run. If you have to pick a standard level, the bigger the better.
- More water is not necessarily better! We need to have a reasonable balance of what is fun, safe, and challenging. If you make the release much higher than 1200

- cfs, I do believe you will drive away many more people than you will attract to the run. I found my day at 1200 cfs to be very challenging, but not dangerous.
- I have paddled it up to about 4,000 cfs and the river seemed to be much more fun than at 1,000 cfs. High flows are preferred for this run since it has no real constrictions except the one big drop.
  - When we ran the Cheoah on natural flow back in 2003 at around 1900 cfs, I thought the section from the gauge bridge to the lake was easily the funnest river I'd ever been on. In particular, the section from the lodge to the lake was spectacular, like nothing I've been on before. I'm a pretty solid class IV boater (comfortable on Nanty Cascades, Wilson Creek, Watauga, Tallulah...a bit gripped on the narrows minus the big ones). I ran it that day in a playboat, so it was very doable. I felt the only draw back to the 1900 flow was the center lines on the big drop of bear creek rapid looked pretty terminal, but the far left line was perfect and the far right line was much easier than it was at lower flows. At this level, I feel that Graham county would become a destination paddling area, the river was phenomenal with a level of difficulty of the Upper Gauley at standard release. This section of river really disappointed me at 1200 cfs. Just another river at this level, people in the area will paddle it but I don't see folks coming long distances for it, nor would I expect a lot of interest from the rafting industry (basically one big drop and that's it in a raft at 1200 cfs).
  - More accurate releases would help me plan my trips from AL more effectively. For example: I missed some fun days at good flow because a low flow was planned so I didn't bother driving the 5 hours it takes to get there.
  - Obviously, I don't have a lot of experience at different flow levels. A lot of speculation based on what I have seen and what I have been told by boaters I know well and paddle with a lot. As people get more experience with the river, higher flows will be appreciated more. Also, the wood factor will hopefully become less of an issue.
  - THNAK YOU! For letting us have this great run, the river is great!
  - Some better release times & flows would be better. A group in our Club went on Sunday for lower water and ended up getting more water.
  - Keeping the flow up to 600-800 CFS between first and second days helps people to find a flow best suited to them. Please note my opinions are based on an upper and middle section run not a lower section run.
  - I WAS THERE AT 1000CFS AND I THOUGHT IT WAS LOW, I CAME BACK AND IT WAS AT ABOUT 850CFS AND IT SUCKED BAD.
  - It would be good to have some scheduled high flows to be make runs at those levels to be able access the runs at the higher levels.
  - The 4 times I ran it the flows were about the same. I preferred around 1300.
  - Awesome stretch of whitewater! I think 1500 cfs could be a challenging flow for the intermediate boater, and it is a blast for those who are comfortable. Great down river play and good place to hand-paddle.
  - I'd love, love to see more lower flows. Also, I'd love to see it hit the level it's supposed to be. I know there was a 600 day that didn't happen. I got waved off by a friend, so I didn't waste a drive. Also, I missed an 850 day that turned out to



be bigger than the 1000 day before. Hats off to getting the water and I'm looking forward to the bugs getting sorted out.

- Very good time on the three days we paddled.
- The low releases are crap.... 1200 was sort of fun, but just barely acceptable. This is a fun easy-ish class IV run that can be made hard if done so on purpose. After talking to many people, they all seem to agree that a higher flow would be better. Unfortunately, Raft companies have the final say, and they say 1200, which is just barely acceptable, and I would not be likely to go very many times. Still, GREAT job by AW by getting this opened up for recreation.
- Cheoah remains a fun run at 750 cfs, 1,000 seems about optimal, 1,500 was getting big for me but I had no real difficulties.
- I know my info has not been very helpful. I have only ran the river once. I thought it was very challenging. I don't lead or run class 4 unless I have someone with me that knows the run usually. I was paddling with some folks that I really trusted and that know my ability and preferences. I ran the Upper Gauley just before this weekend and that may have been the biggest pushy water I have been on other than the Cheoah. I do think more trees need to come out of the river bed. I remember one ferry that really scared me because of the small passage between trees. Overall I thought it was a very memorable run. I did think that it was very challenging and non stop fun. I would run it again at that level. I would most likely prefer a smaller cfs but I have nothing to compare it to due to my lack of knowledge of how much 100 or 500 cfs change the river. Thanks for all you are doing.
- I've only run it at 1080 cfs. At that level, it was incredibly fun - hard enough to keep my attention, but easy enough that it never felt stressful.
- More water, i.e. (greater than 1200 to 1300 cfs) would make some sections of the river less boney/trashy. The Bear Creek Rapid section and the rapids between Topoco lodge and the lake would become much harder and pushier. So in my opinion it's a trade off.
- High water flow days obviously increase the risk of mishaps, swims or possibly worse. This river at moderate flows already produces carnage. A solid, effective system of warning boaters about higher flows would be very necessary. Also, the flows posted on the AW page have not matched what is releases. Boaters need to know what to expect, especially when leading those new to the run.
- Regarding my answers for #12 & 13: My run on 26 Jan 2002 was at 3760cfs according to USGS historic data. Actually, the level fluctuated a lot on this day - the gauge read 6.0 ft when we launched and 5.0 ft at the end of the day, according to my notes. This level was very pushy, but also very doable. I would run it again at that level, and perhaps a bit higher, hence the 4000 answer. I would recommend to others looking for 'high challenge' something a bit lower, hence the 3500 answer. I actually have no idea what the numbers should really be - I only know what the maximum gauge reading was (6.0) and I'm trying to correlate with the USGS flow data, which only gives a single data point for that day. Please take as my inputs for #12 & 13 the equivalent flows for 6.1 and 5.5 ft, respectively, on the gauge.

- The times of which the water is actually released need to start earlier- so far putting on before 11:30 doesn't seem to be much of an option. Releases need to start when I paddler can put on to the river by at least 10 am.
- Have not run below 1000 cfs, but seems like it would be very rocky and scrapey, probably more difficult without a good cushion of water over the rocks.
- My craft of choice is a solo open boat. This is a tough open boat run because of the continuous nature and scarce eddies which make bailing difficult. At 950 CFS, I think the run would be plenty difficult yet would still allow adequate opportunities for open boaters to regroup and bail. That said, 950 is probably a little less exciting for decked boaters. Perhaps the flows could be set such that on one weekend release there could be a 950 release followed by an 1150 (?) release. The next weekend of releases perhaps the flows could be swapped, having the 1150 first and a 950 second. The thing is, I am just so appreciative of the opportunity to be able to run it at whatever release is given (within reason). My thanks to all concerned for this marvelous opportunity!
- There is confusion regarding what the scheduled release is versus what shows on the gauge (which I'm sure you know is near the reservoir and hence takes into account natural flows from the tribs). This will tend to skew your results.
- My raft weighs a little more than most rafts( 135lbs dry )I seem to catch a lot of rocks on this run compared to most. I took my mini me raft down in October and it seemed to be a perfect run. I love the Cheoah!!!! It's all good!!!
- Having one lower flow and one higher flow release per weekend would accommodate the largest number of boaters. I think that the following would be ideal... Sat: 1000 CFS Sun: 1300 CFS
- The recommendation to others depends upon their skill set.
- It seems that boaters do not know what the flow level is going to be ahead of time, as there has been a lot of variation in the past. Consistency between published and actual flow level is very important
- Too bad that release dates conflict with Tallulah, but it is nice that high water days on Cheoah is Saturday and on Sundays on Tallulah, that way both rivers can be enjoyed at more optimal flows.
- I was hoping to make my first trip @850 in an OC-1. The release was changed, it was running @1100 or so. My buddy had bag problems, we paddled 1/3 of a mile in middle sec. I'm wondering if the open canoeing community considers the river practical to run at all above 900- without installing an electric bilge pump. We saw one other open boater besides us- in a tiny boat-in the water that weekend.
- I would of course like to see more releases. I don't have enough information (have only run once at 1300cfs/5 ft) to comment on other flow levels. I would be interested in a lower more technical flow release but do not know what that flow would be.
- I was told we ran it at around 800 on the date checked ?
- I observed the river for three weekends, paddling it the last weekend. If the brush and trees are cleared out- creating more eddies and alternate routes- I think I could handle higher flows. I really like the 1200cfs level. While 1600+ would provide a really unique SE experience the number of paddlers that have the skills to

experience it safely would be much less. I'd rather see more weekend days than higher releases.

- I was on the river on April 15 and 16 (Sat and Sun) 2006. I was told that the flows were 1050 cfs on Saturday and 850 cfs on Sunday. According to the listings above, it looks like the actual flows were a bit higher. Nevertheless, I found the flows frustratingly low and boney. Comparisons to the Gauley and 'bif water' were laughable. I have guided commercial raft trips on the Upper Gauley for 15 years, and have traveled extensively with my Shredder, paddling both technical runs and big water runs. I left the Cheoah feeling more like I had paddled a large creek than a big water river. I came back and reported to paddling friends (most of whom are hard boaters) that I would not recommend the drive (six hours) until more brush was cleared from the river bed and the flows were increased at least to 1300 or 1400 cfs. With less brush and more water, the Cheoah would indeed be a classic run worth traveling for.
- I have run the Cheoah at a variety of water levels, including extremely high (4000+ cfs). It is best for most boaters at 1250-1500. Higher levels are very fun (1800-2400) but start to exclude many boaters and make raft trips much more dangerous.
- I have only run it twice at roughly 1000. I would definitely like to see more water but I think that it is still very fun and all the boater snobs should just leave the river to everyone else if its not good enough for them.
- With the price of Gas, a lower level of release would certainly decrease my desire to make the trip.
- Lower flows are less pushy and thus a little more doable for class 4 paddlers, but the trade off is more rocks, and in the harder sections, the rocks present a hazard as much as the continuous pushy water at higher levels. The trade off with lower water may be preferred by paddlers with less skill, but I would rather have more water.
- I felt that at 1500 cfs, the river had push, the holes were big, but the lines were manageable. At 1150 cfs, the lines were less pushy, and the holes in different spots were very sticky, causing 2 swims and one hike out from our group. I liked the larger flow. At 650 cfs, from Bear Creek Rapid down was fun, and could be fun even lower, but that's a short section of river for a release.
- The river needs a little more flow anywhere between 1350 and 1500CFS. I think the run would be safer because I took a few rolls and have bruises because the water was just to shallow.
- Actual release data needs to be published and made available BEFORE the release date - the three times I ran the river, posted releases were woefully below actual releases