

August 14, 2009

Congressman John J. Duncan Jr.
800 Market Street, Suite 110
Knoxville, TN 37902

Dear Congressman Duncan,

American Whitewater is a national, membership-based, nonprofit organization whose mission is to conserve and restore our Nation's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely. On behalf of our members in Tennessee, I am writing to seek your help in protecting some of the most pristine rivers and streams in the Cherokee National Forest. Both people and wildlife depend on clean water and fresh flowing rivers. Our members at American Whitewater depend on these resources to paddle, and to refresh our spirits.

Rarely do we have an opportunity to protect an entire watershed. With wilderness designation, we can protect the entire Upper Bald River watershed in the Tellico Ranger District. While this is recommended in the 2004 Cherokee National Forest Management Plan, an Act of Congress is required to make this official. We also have an opportunity to protect the headwaters of First Creek, Milligan Creek, and Tallassee Creek by protecting the Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Addition Wilderness Study Area. These creeks flow into the Tapoco Lands and then into Calderwood Lake (Little Tennessee River) adjacent to Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Wilderness protection will preserve some of the most spectacular and remote paddling opportunities in Tennessee. It will also dovetail well with our recent successful efforts to protect lands in the Little Tennessee Watershed and restore the Cheoah River through the relicensing of the Tapoco Hydroelectric Project.

We hope you will help protect some of Tennessee's few remaining wild rivers and lands as Wilderness. Wilderness designation is the best way to ensure these last wild places are conserved for current and future generations.

We look forward to hearing from you and appreciate your leadership on this matter.

Thank you,



Kevin Colburn
National Stewardship Director

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