

Sumter National Forest
Andrew Pickens Ranger District

From: District Ranger Robert Sitzlar

Dear Interested Stakeholder:

The Sumter National Forest, in coordination with neighboring ranger districts of the Chattahoochee-Oconee and Nantahala National Forests, is reviewing two proposals to permit use of National Forest System trails and roads for competitive long-distance footraces. Primarily following the Foothills National Recreation Trail and Chattooga River Trail, the route of each event would use terrestrial trails in the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River Corridor as well as the adjacent Nantahala and/or Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests.

Public Involvement

The Forest Service is requesting your input to help identify issues, resource considerations, and opportunities as we consider these proposals. We are seeking feedback to help identify potential issues or concerns, highlight local knowledge of recreation use, access patterns, and resource sensitivities, and refine the scope and design of proposed activities.

Chattooga Wild and Scenic River Corridor

As the administrating body for the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River and its associated buffering corridor, Sumter National Forest is charged with vigorously preserving the river’s outstandingly remarkable values, which are the river’s unique and iconic geology, biology, scenery, history and recreation. The proponents have designed their respective events specifically to minimize impacts to protected resources. The Forest Service is confident that these short-term events can be held in such manner as to pose no discernable risk to the Chattooga’s outstandingly remarkable values, and this opportunity will allow our recreation and natural resource specialists to understand any unforeseen impacts and further determine whether similar events may be permitted in the future.

The Forest Service frequently issues special-use permits for identical activities on national forests throughout the nation, and our specialists similarly anticipate no significant impacts to resources or other forest visitors. Participants in either proposed event would enter the national forest and Wild and Scenic River corridor after having already traveled 50-100 miles on foot, by which point participants will be spread out from each other over a considerable distance. This separation means that other trail users may observe a single hiker every 20-40 minutes as they travel over the course of the route. Other recreation events involving up to 100 participants are regularly permitted on similar routes here, and likewise participants are instructed to maintain separation between each other to avoid exceeding group size limits in the Wild and Scenic River corridor.

All proposed activities would follow Forest Plan standards, closure orders, applicable federal and state permitting processes, resource-specific design criteria, and Best Management Practices. All relevant activities in each event would take place on open National Forest System trails and roads and areas associated with existing public-use infrastructure. There would be no encroachment on Congressionally designated Wilderness. Event proponents have preemptively coordinated extensively with local law enforcement, emergency services, volunteer trail maintaining organizations, and local/regional tourism organizations, some of which have already expressed support for the proposed races’ positive impacts on the economies of nearby communities while balancing a respect for outdoor spaces and resources.

How to Provide Feedback

Please submit feedback by October 19, 2026, using one of the following methods:

Email: sm.fs.aprd@usda.gov

Mail: 112 Andrew Pickens Circle, Mountain Rest, SC 29664

Hand Delivery: Andrew Pickens Ranger District Office, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., 112 Andrew Pickens Circle, Mountain Rest, S.C. 29664

Please include "Long Distance Trail Event feedback" in the subject line of your correspondence.

Additional Information

If you have questions or need further information, please contact Howard Morrison, recreation program manager, at 864-638-4463 or howard.morrison@usda.gov.

Thank you for your interest in the management of your National Forests. Your input is appreciated and will assist us in considering these recreational opportunities on the Andrew Pickens Ranger District of the Sumter National Forest.



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