



SWEETWATER COUNTY TRAVEL & TOURISM BOARD

**Sweetwater County Travel and Tourism Response to
Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area Management Plan**

July 2, 2024

Subject: Request for Additional Consideration of Firehole Campground and Buckboard Marina in the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area (FGNRA) Management Plan and Draft EA

Dear FGNRA Management Plan & Draft Environmental Assessment Teams,

Sweetwater County Travel and Tourism appreciates the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area Management Plan update currently underway. We understand the importance of balancing visitor needs with resource conservation.

We would like to request that the plan more fully address the needs of the Firehole Campground area and Buckboard Marina within the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area. These areas are crucial for attracting visitors to Sweetwater County and contributing to our local economy.

Specific Considerations for Firehole Campground and Buckboard Marina:

- **Maintain Existing Infrastructure:** The Wyoming sites in the FGNRA have been significantly neglected by the Forest Service and are in desperate need of repair.
- **Improve Amenities:** Upgrading existing amenities, such as restrooms and campgrounds would enhance the visitor experience and encourage longer stays.
- **Accessibility:** Consideration should be given to improving accessibility for visitors with disabilities in both the Firehole Campground and the Buckboard area. There are areas currently not ADA compliant.
- **Interpretation and Education:** Providing educational signage and programs about the unique natural and cultural resources in the Wyoming sites would enrich the visitor experience.

In addition to summer visitors traveling through the area on their own, Sweetwater County Travel and Tourism also operates the Flaming Gorge Bus Tours and depends on the Forest Service to maintain these sites so that passengers can utilize them on the tour. We believe that by addressing these areas, the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area Management Plan can better support a thriving tourism industry in Sweetwater County, while still prioritizing the conservation of the natural environment.

Sweetwater County Travel and Tourism also supports feedback provided by the County regarding the Draft EA:



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1. According to the Sweetwater County Federal Lands and Resource Plan Section 19.2.3, SWC supports existing levels of motorized public access to traditional outdoor recreational designations in the County must be continued including both snow machine and OHV use". The Draft EA does not include managements actions to address future signage and designation of OHV trails, which will provide additional recreational opportunities around the Flaming Gorge Recreation Area and reduce the impact of OHV's on non-designated trails.
2. The Draft EA does not provide a range of alternatives and required by NEPA.
3. The Draft EA does not provide management actions that support the improvement of existing sites such as the USFS campground at Buckboard Marina nor does it include improvements that are necessary for Firehole campground. The Forest Service has neglected both sites. Firehole campground does not have bathrooms that meet ADA requirements and there are structures at both locations that are is need of painting and repair.
4. Section 19.2.6 of the SWC Federal L ands and Resource Plan states: 19.2.6 The County believes that BLM or U.S. Forest Service and Wyoming State Parks must coordinate and consult closely with the County on any proposals for special recreation designations (Special Recreation Management Areas, wilderness, etc.) that may affect current and future recreation use". There is a lack of consistency within the Draft EA that includes coordination with state and local agencies in Wyoming as required by FLPMA.
5. Sweetwater County supports a broad range of recreational opportunities. The Draft EA does not propose management actions that support a full range of recreational opportunities in Sweetwater County.
6. The Draft EA does not propose a balance of infrastructure improvements in Wyoming. Most of the document focuses on Utah improvements.

Sweetwater County Travel and Tourism has always been happy to collaborate with the Forest Service by combining financial resources to move projects forward and plans to continue that collaboration in the future. We are confident that by working together, we can create a plan that benefits both visitors and the long-term health of the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jenissa Meredith, MA, CTA

Chief Executive Officer

Sweetwater County Travel and Tourism