

To: Scott Fitzwilliams/White River National Forest

RE: Sweetwater Lake Recreation Management

I am writing to express my strong objection to the proposed development of Sweetwater Lake as a state campground and recreation area. As a fourth-generation resident of Sweetwater, with children who represent the fifth generation, I have deep-rooted connections to this area and a profound understanding of its unique value and significance.

Sweetwater Lake is not just a body of water; it is a cherished natural resource and a vital part of our community's heritage. The lake and its surrounding areas have long been a sanctuary for wildlife, a source of clean water, and a peaceful retreat for residents and visitors alike. The proposed development threatens to disrupt this delicate balance, leading to irreversible environmental, social, and cultural impacts.

The potential environmental consequences of turning Sweetwater Lake into a state campground and recreation area are alarming. Increased human activity will inevitably lead to pollution, habitat destruction, and disturbances to the local wildlife. The introduction of infrastructure such as roads, campsites, and recreational facilities will alter the landscape and ecosystem, causing long-term harm to the flora and fauna that call this area home.

Moreover, the social and cultural fabric of Sweetwater is at risk. Our community has a rich history and a strong sense of identity, closely tied to the unspoiled nature of Sweetwater Lake. The development project would attract a large influx of visitors, leading to overcrowding, noise, and increased pressure on local resources. This transformation would erode the tranquility and charm that make Sweetwater a special place for its residents and future generations.

While I understand the need for outdoor recreation and tourism, I firmly believe that the proposed development at Sweetwater Lake is not the right approach. It is crucial to preserve the integrity of our cherished natural resources. I do support some minor adjustments to the current camping facilities and recognize the need for potential growth in primitive and semi-primitive campgrounds. However, I do not support the proposal of multiple buildings, employee housing, and maintenance buildings, which would significantly alter the character and environmental balance of the area.

In conclusion, I urge you to reconsider the proposal to develop Sweetwater Lake as a state campground and recreation area. The potential environmental degradation, coupled with the social and cultural impacts, outweigh any short-term economic benefits. Protecting Sweetwater Lake is not just a matter of preserving a natural resource; it is about safeguarding the heart and soul of our community for generations to come.

Thank you for considering my concerns and comments towards the EIS Process. We reserve the right to offer additional comments as well as expand on these comments, throughout the process. I hope that you will take the necessary steps to halt this development and explore more sustainable alternatives that respect the environment and the cultural history of this area.

Sincerely,

Thomas Thatcher

Brittany Thatcher

Kevin Thatcher

Tinsley Thatcher