

Comments on Sweetwater Lake Recreation Management and Development Project

I have enjoyed many amazing days at Sweetwater Lake (and the associated access to the Flat Tops Wilderness area) during summers over at least the last 25 years, and have many great memories. Upon hearing about the acquisition and management by the Forest Service and Colorado Parks and Wildlife, I had high hopes for improvements while maintaining the rare natural splendor, environment and history of this unique area. However, seeing the development and increased traffic planned by the Sweetwater project, I have great concerns that we will lose too much the unique nature of this beautiful area. My main areas of concern include:

- **HEAVY TRAFFIC ON INADEQUATE ROADS** – I've heard expectations of 250 people per day at 2-1/2 people per car, so about 100 cars per day traveling the dead-end road up to Sweetwater. I have **not** heard any plans for this bi-county (Eagle and Garfield) road's improvements! This is already a dangerous road for the large horse trailers and trucks that frequent this very narrow and blind-curve road. Imagine the problem if traffic is increased, especially to include large RVs! This road just cannot support more traffic!
- **LOSS OF NATURAL QUALITIES OF AREA** – The greatest feature of this area is its wilderness feeling. If this primitive camping area becomes just another built-up RV park, with dump facilities and hookups, the natural feeling of the area is lost. I do like the idea of a few rustic cabins, as such cabins have been an historic part of this area for many, many years. But keep it rustic, not an advanced park for large RVs! Bivouac camping trailers and the like are fine, but **hookups?!?** There is **already** a nearby RV park with full hook-up facilities and dump station (RiverDance RV near Dotsero). Luxury RV users can already have their hookups and just do day trips to nearby Sweetwater. Why destroy the unique rustic nature of Sweetwater?
- **RETENTION OF EQUESTRIAN FOCUS** – Horses and horseback riding is one of the most predominant activities of the Sweetwater area. Since the adjacent wilderness area does not allow vehicles, horseback access is key for many uses (trail riding, camping, hunting, etc.). Current parking for the necessary horse (and mule) trailers has always been a serious limitation at Sweetwater (just a small, narrow sloping lot that is often quite crowded), and something like the planned horse trailer parking and equestrian camp sites discussed in the plans would help. In my opinion, this is more important to the historical and typical usage patterns of this area than an enlarged camp ground.
- **HOME-COOK KITCHEN AND ESSENTIALS** – Though it may sound a bit out-of-place in a rustic area, the small, simple historic and rustic "restaurant" maintained by A.J. Brink outfitters was one of the most wonderful and unique features of this area! Home-cooked dining while watching the hummingbirds – *one of my great memories!* Sweetwater is obviously an out-of-the-way location, far from other sources of a decent meal or forgotten necessities (also available and handy). This simple kitchen was a welcome haven for folks just back from a long hot horseback ride or hike through the wilderness, especially on an extended stay! It served simple, delicious home-cooked meals that really hit the spot! I know the new plan includes some sort of "coffee and pie shop," but pre-packaged food offerings & **food trucks?!?** **Disgusting** in such a unique rustic area – why bother going to the wilderness?! Pre-packaged food and food trucks are available in Denver! **Bring back** our unique, historic home-kitchen haven!

We **do** want improvements to the area, but we **don't want overuse**. Please keep it natural and rustic, without the loss of the unique characteristics that made this historic Sweetwater!