

The Koster Family

To: Scott Fitzwilliams, White River National Forest

RE: Sweetwater Lake Recreation Management and Development Plan

We are writing as the Koster family to express our strong objection to the proposed development of Sweetwater Lake as a state campground. As longtime residents who have raised our children on Sweetwater and own property on Colorado River Road, we have a deep personal and historical connection to this area, and we are gravely concerned about the potential impacts of this development.

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 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, our family property on Colorado River Road will be directly impacted by the increased traffic resulting from this development. The influx of visitors will lead to overcrowding, noise, and a significant increase in traffic, which will not only disrupt our daily lives but also pose safety risks for all residents in the area. Our children raise animals and frequently utilize these roads to exercise them, ride bikes, and play. The increased traffic will jeopardize their safety and hinder these activities that are integral to our family life and the upbringing of our children.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we witnessed firsthand the consequences of increased traffic and visitation to the area. The litter, illegal camping, traffic, drinking, and the need for additional road maintenance and police support were overwhelming. The thought of the State adding this burden on the local communities while disrupting this special cultural and peaceful ranching/farming area is concerning.

While we understand the need for outdoor recreation and tourism, we 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. We do support some minor adjustments to the current camping facilities and recognize the need for potential growth in primitive and semi-primitive campgrounds. However, we 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, we urge you to reconsider the proposal to develop Sweetwater Lake as a state campground. The potential environmental degradation, coupled with the social and cultural impacts and the increased traffic on Colorado River Road, 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 our 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,

The Koster Family

Evan Koster
Maggee Koster
Raelyn Koster
Colter Koster