

Comments on Sweetwater Lake Recreation Management and Development Project

I've been going to the Sweetwater Lake area for over 40 years, starting in my 20's. I have used it as a destination place to spend a few days near the lake in the cabins that were offered; even more, have used it as a trail head to ride my horse up to the Flattops Wilderness area for trips ranging from 5 to 10 days, camping in the wilderness.

Viewing the scope and intent proposed for changes to the area as a Colo. State Park, I STRONGLY urge the scope to be drastically reduced for a number of reasons. 250 people per day at 2 1/2 people per car equal about 100 cars per day traveling the dead end road up to Sweetwater. There are no plans by either Eagle or Garfield county to improve that road. This is a narrow, two lane road that in places does not have room for two big RV's, etc. to even pass. The only reason there are not more accidents already on that road is the relatively small amount of traffic on it. It is crazy to add more traffic without plans in place to drastically widen and improve that road.

Further, reducing the scope considerably would preserve the unique, natural qualities of the area. I would suggest keeping it a more primitive camping experience with NO large RV's, No dump stations and NO electrical hookups. Leaving a few of the rustic cabins with just heat and running water would be nice but not critical.

The Sweetwater area has long been a popular haven for horseback riding. This is even more critical as the Indian Peaks area and other front range locations now limit horses on much of their trails. I strongly would like to see space allowed for horse trailer parking and camping, either for day rides from the Sweetwater Lake area or for jumping off into the Flattops Wilderness for several days up to 2 weeks with horses. There is no official parking area for horse trailers except the narrow sliver of Forest Service land that juts down towards the lake. At least that much should be maintained and even enlarged for horse trailer/travel which has been so popular in the area history. There is considerable land around the lake to do this and still leave much of the lake shore untouched. Putting a large camping ground in the meadow area past the lake will impact that area and the wildlife much more than using part of the east end of the lake for trailer and car parking.

Again though, the part of the proposal that I find the most issue with is the scope of the project. To bring an additional 250 people in per day will be detrimental to the area, dangerous for travelers on that primitive dead end road and destroy what you, hopefully, are trying to preserve as a natural, beautiful area.