Sweetwater Lake

State Park OPPOSED

My name is Randy D Quint and I have been a resident of the Sweetwater Community for six years come this October. When we, my wife Heather and I, were entertaining the idea of moving to Sweetwater we would dine at the Sweetwater Lodge and enjoy the wonderful view and environment of the surrounding area. It was an exceptional experience, and we would recommend it to others. You cannot be serious about expecting patrons at the Lodge to look over the many roofs of RV’s thinking this is a spectacular view. It would be the same as those in Cordillera Valley overlooking the trailer park on the opposite side of the valley. It is the number one complaint of those residents!

Now having been in the community for this length of time we have, I can provide my experiences and perspectives based on facts. There are several facts which need serious consideration and all of my questions need to be shared with the Sweetwater Community and every one of these questions honestly answered before any finalized plan is committed to and executed.

Fact, Sweetwater Lake has a tremendous history and with the current State Park Plan or even a substantial improvement made to encourage and allow large RV type vehicles (rigs), many of them, to travel to and stay at this location would be a huge mistake. Let’s face it, driving in and hooking up, running a/c, generators and whatever additional equipment they are likely to bring will just bring noise, air & maybe even water pollution.

* How in the world could one even believe they could be able to retain the history and the quaintness of this area by allowing visitors who are less likely to pay respect to the environment than the rustic camper?
* Replacing the vegetation, dirt & stone with many concrete slabs, really? Who at the park service believes this will enhance the setting and experience which has been the norm for 100+ years or more?
* Tell me how you would like the increased RV/large rig traffic motoring by your house?

Fact, Sweetwater Road is dangerous as it currently exists, five miles of gravel and five miles of deteriorated asphalt. Even with two full grades and compactions (spring & fall) every year for the first five mile of gravel, it is still insufficient to maintain the road in a safe condition requiring additional touch-ups each season to keep it safe, because of the washboard and large potholed created from existing traffic. It will be important to know beforehand how this will be addressed and guaranteed for the residents.

* Who will be tasked with maintaining the road, especially the gravel section?
* Who will pay for maintaining the road and how often will it be attended to?
* Who will be the contact person when the big RV rigs create a more dangerous driving condition? Will it be you Heather Noel?
* Let’s not overlook the importance of safety for the kids & cattle, the dogs & deer, what precautions will be implemented for them?

Fact, it has been stated as a benefit for a State Park, this would allow more access to Sweetwater Lake as a reason for pushing for the State Park. A statement is made, yet the opposite happens. This leads me to the next point.

* The fact is, since its acquisition, more restrictions and less access have resulted, please explain why?
* This is the opposite of an intended stated reason for making it a State Park, why?
* Why have the caves with the petrographs been restricted?
* Why has the Lodge been closed and not renovated sufficiently to reopen?

Fact, this is just another example of Politicians not representing the people, especially the ones who would be most impacted. Less is more. Why not get the site back to where it was before the acquisition, small cabins refurbished, Lodge kitchen updated and modest updates to retain the charm to start with. Wait and see if that brings in the masses. Advertise it as much as you want, find out the true demand. Displacing the stables and pastures simply demonstrates the lack of knowledge and forethought gone into the planning process by others who likely know nothing about the area. In my opinion this simply demonstrates just how unknowledgeable and foolish the planners are.

* Why are Politicians and Bureaucrats choosing for others what they believe should be done without real knowledge of the area or even understanding the amount of demand for camping which is likely to ever be realized?
* Why isn’t the approach to Sweetwater Lake take the same or a similar route as that of Hidden Lake?
* Has it been considered to take this project in several small steps instead of one large expansion?
* Has it been considered to add only a half dozen additional primitive camping sites to start with, to see if the demand truly exists?
* What is the need to overdue the expansion without even knowing how much expansion is even necessary?
* What studies have been completed and by whom to substantiate such a large scale plan?
* Why not work around the existing land use and compliment it as opposed to tearing it down?

Fact, the horses and stables has been there for many years along with the feed they have been receiving. I expect all the feed brought in is local, and whatever weeds are already here are going to stay, unless of course someone, the government agency, is going to pay to have all those weeds removed from the entire area (100’s if not 1000’s of acres) to keep them remove. It certainly cannot be not anyone who has lived in this area or been exposed to this type of environment.

* Tell us, what is the importance of the requirement of bringing in weed-free feed for the horses which cannot touch the ground and is more costly for those buying the feed?
* How would you like to look at the stacks of bales alongside of the road while driving home to your house which was not ever required before?
* Just another demonstration of foolish and restrictive policies which are simply not obtainable and just plain ridiculous, who comes up with this stuff?

Ok, now let’s think about improvement costs and the payback period. I am curious to know as to how much is intended to be spent on improvements and what is the estimated payback period and simply how much would be charged for both daily entry fees and fees associated with either cabins, rustic camping sites or RV sites to create income to pay for this project. What are the annual operating expenses for personnel to manage and maintain the size of the project/park. I personally have worked for a couple of different government agencies and know from firsthand experience the work ethic is generally very poor and certainly leads to wasted time and money. I’m sure you recognize the difference and know exactly what I am trying to share. Just another reason to keep this site in the hands of individuals who will operate it for a positive cash flow and not another deficit spending situation.

* I do see Forest Service vehicles traveling by my property headed to Sweetwater Lake. Tell me, what are the costs associated with those personnel and what exactly which tasks do they perform? Is the travel time required to get to and from Sweetwater Lake justify the work actually performed?
* How is it intended to prevent a behavior of laxed work ethics to one of behaviors of a business owner concerned with profitability?

I suggest you consider the bottom line should be this:

First, do not make it any less safe than the road condition and traffic already is!

Second, preserve the history and the setting as it is with minimal changes and impact on the land and residents all along the route to the lake from I-70.

Third, to start, get the area back to the way it was before the acquisition, open the cave, cabins and Lodge. Return the management to the operators before the acquisition as well to those who will operate it in an efficient manner.

Fourth, start small with a few rustic campsites and then measure the true demand as measured by those wanting to camp and make it known.

Fifth, keep this from becoming another political/bureaucratic blunder by over improving and deficit spending with the likely outcome of never breaking even or turning a profit.

Just do the right thing!

Randy Dean Quint & Heather Jane Quint