

To: Heather Noel, Acting Forest Supervisor
White River National Forest
900 Grand Avenue
Glenwood Springs, CO 81601

August 1st, 2024

How does the United States Forest Service and Colorado Parks and Wildlife plan to keep Sweetwater Lake from becoming another Sylvan Lake if they officially make it a state park?

Over a period of only eleven days, a small group of Eagle and Garfield County residents have been able to get ~~501~~ signatures on the attached "NO STATE PARK" at Sweetwater Lake petition. This petition was created due to a USFS employee saying multiple times that we, the residents of Sweetwater Lake, were the only ones against a state park. This petition proves that it isn't just the Sweetwater community members who DO NOT want a state park. We know that Colorado law mandates signatures for petitions to be collected in person. We decided to add the names of people who emailed asking to be added to the petition. Their voice needed to be heard too, since they couldn't sign it in person.

I met a lot of people who either still live near Brush Creek or who have moved to another location away from the traffic that Sylvan Lake State Park continues to bring to the area. I visited with people who used to go to Sylvan Lake who no longer visit due to the number of visitors. They don't want to go somewhere where there is wall to wall people or cannot visit due to the inability to reserve a last-minute camp site.

Here are a few conversations.

Those who still live in and around Brush Creek Road told me to keep up the fight against the state park because the traffic and trash that a state park brings is beyond miserable. The number of people who told me they "used to go" to Sylvan Lake was incredible. I was told that they don't go anymore because it is overcrowded and has become a "playground" for the front range. The park is no longer a place where the locals can go.

Another point that was brought up more times than not was the impact that Sylvan Lake State Park has on the surrounding areas. I had numerous people tell me that when the park becomes full the visitors do not leave and go home. They look for other places to go surrounding the park area. Many mentioned the impact it has had, especially on the Fulford area. Homeowners around the park told me areas that had never been impacted before are now scarred from the campers. They stated that areas around the park have been inundated with people leaving fire rings, trash, toilet paper and feces scattered around the impacted area, and once grassy areas have become dust. I had heard surrounding areas would be impacted and listening to this time after time confirms my fear that the Colorado River Road basin, the Sweetwater Road area, Sheep Creek, Trail Gulch Road and cow camp (CR 151) are also in jeopardy. The Colorado River Road is already inundated with bikers, campers, fisherman, rafters, tubers, motorcycles, UTV's and people on a scenic drive.

I was also told if I wanted to get even more angry, just go up to Sylvan Lake on a weekend and sit in your car and watch. They said the traffic alone will enrage me.

They said it will take only one weekend of observing it to light a fire to defeat Sweetwater Lake becoming a park. I was told not only is the car and RV traffic horrible but the impacts from ROV's (recreational off-road vehicles), dirt bikes/motorcycles, and four wheelers have left scars all over the area. They also expressed their frustration with the constant noise and how it is beyond disheartening not only for them but for wildlife. This impacts the quality of life for the residents, including the wildlife who reside around the state park.

Our state parks and national forests are being "loved to death." Several people I spoke with brought up their frustrations with the Coffee Pot Road and the impact that a state park will have on the Flat Tops. People will flock to this area when the park becomes full. This area is already an interstate during the hunting season, however, since 2020, the amount of traffic on the Coffee Pot Road is 24/7, as soon as the drift of snow leaves Crane Park until the amount of snow prohibits cars from entering the area.

-Attending the Glenwood Springs open house on June 5th, 2024, in this open house forum with Forest Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and Eagle Valley Land Trust, we noticed only three of the original group of employees were in attendance out of around ten who originally met with the community group. In the meetings between FS, CPW, and the Eagle Valley Land Trust, the Sweetwater Lake Working Group (whom Scott Fitzwilliams named our group of community members), were fearful that down the road, no one from the original group (CPW, FS, EVLT) would be present during the NEPA process. As I looked around the room, I realized the prediction was spot on. Our quality of life will be impacted by the individuals who helped decide our fate within the Sweetwater Community and these employees will be absent and moved onto their next job/project, yet we are left holding the bag. In a conversation with a new Forest Service employee, this person asked if anyone in the Sweetwater area was in favor of a state park. The answer was **all 93 homes/100% were against a state park**. The next question was asked by this FS employee, "then why are they still pushing a state park?" And my answer was, "my thoughts exactly, can you tell me?"

This is just a handful of examples of conversations I had with individuals as they signed the petition **against a state park** at Sweetwater Lake. I've learned a lot from the people I encountered, and I remain as defiant as ever to continue to fight the battle against a state park at Sweetwater Lake. I am concerned about how the increased traffic/visitors will impact our community's culture and environment.

Back in 2020, when the residents of the Colorado River Road and Sweetwater Road were evacuated due to the fire danger a few neighbors who stayed behind noticed the large numbers of wildlife seen in the area throughout the day. They said it reminded them of back in the 1980's when wildlife was seen daily. What happens to wildlife when the state builds a park for 250 visitors a day. With 2.5 people per car, that is 100 cars up and 100 cars down a day. On top of the cars from the 93 homeowners and five Airbnb's and adding work vehicles (plumbers, electricians etc.), delivery trucks, trash trucks, tractors, dump trucks etc. If wildlife is already impacted due to the current traffic, what would state park traffic do to our community and how would it impact our quality of life?

THOSE LISTED ON THE PETITION SHEETS ARE IN FAVOR OF NO STATE PARK AT SWEETWATER LAKE.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Stephens [REDACTED]

Bill Stephens [REDACTED]

Malorie Stephens [REDACTED]

Lucas Stephens [REDACTED]

Katie LaFramboise [REDACTED]

Ty LaFramboise [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

*We ask you to not upload this petition onto the reading room to keep names, numbers, and email addresses private to keep these individuals from being compromised. This is for the USFS information. Others will be copied on this including the Town of Gypsum, Eagle County and Garfield County Commissioners.