Dear United States Forest Service,

Sweetwater Lake and the surrounding area is a great destination for disconnecting from the fast-paced lifestyle in modern America. The rustic charm and tranquility found in this special place is in jeopardy with the current plans for development of Sweetwater Lake. Areas like Sylvan Lake have been developed and marketed so much that these once majestic places are now flooded with people, congested with vehicle traffic, and far from the serene places they once were.

Sweetwater Lake is a box canyon, one way in, one way out. There have been numerous events that have closed the Sweetwater Road including fire, mudslides, and rockslides. It is very remote, there is no cell service anywhere near the lake. This makes communication, specifically emergency communication, difficult and nearly impossible. It is simply unsafe for the public to encourage increased visitation in this area. Even with significant upgrades to the infrastructure and facilities at Sweetwater Lake, the county roads are narrow, with blind corners, washboards, and potholes; increased visitation would further degrade the road and increase the likelihood of motor vehicle accidents, conflicts with residents, and congestion at intersections on or near the Sweetwater Road.

Additional use as proposed in the Sweetwater Lake area would result in ecological damage, including damage to vegetation from user created trails and expanded concentration areas for visitors. Without significant effort from the USFS to restrict human activity outside of designated campsites and trails, there will be unmeasurable damage to the vegetation and impacts to wildlife. Increased trash and human waste will become a significant challenge with increasing visitation.

The Sweetwater Lake Resort Restaurant has always been a community gathering place, as there are no other services available in the area, the restaurant provided a place for information, fishing on the lake, small watercraft launching, a great meal and a piece of pie. It truly was the essence of Western living and provided a third space for all to gather. Everyone was welcome at the restaurant; it would be wonderful to see reopen and once again provide many services to the public.

Continuing outfitter operations in this area supports the Sweetwater community economy and keeps our western heritage alive. A.J. Brink Outfitters has supplied decades of wilderness excursions and day rides to countless numbers of people. They are able to maintain the trail systems that the USFS does not have the ability or staffing to maintain. Each year, trails are cleared and maintained by the outfitter, maintaining accessibility for the public.

As users of Sweetwater, we do not wish to see quiet, secluded Sweetwater Lake become inundated with unmanageable numbers of users or for the area to see degradation resultant from this increased use. More importantly, the community of Sweetwater does not want further development of this historic area. We can only hope that you can understand that bigger is not always better, that the simplest things are usually best, and preserving our Western heritage is important. We urge you to keep Sweetwater Lake the quiet oasis that it is and restore it to what it has historically been.

Sincerely,

Olivia Clark

Sammy Evans

Allison Evans-Shepherd

Rick Evans

Pam Evans