

To: Mr. Brian Glaspell, Forest Supervisor, White River National Forest
c/o Ms. Leanne Veldhuis, District Ranger, Eagle-Holy Cross Ranger District

From: Adrienne Brink and Aura Schlegel

A J Brink Outfitters
3406 Sweetwater Rd
Gypsum, CO 81637

RE: Sweetwater Lake Recreation Management and Development Project #284162
PALS #64047 Draft Environmental Impact Statement

We have operated on the Sweetwater Lake property for the last 42 years. The USFS is the 8th property owner. We have worked in Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness, the Rawah Wilderness and the Flattops Wilderness since 1964 and 1969. We purchased our business in 1975. We have also owned a business in the San Juan-Wiminuche Wilderness and the Superstition Wilderness.

Our submission is in support of Alternative 3 or some Hybrid 5. We do not support the CPW involvement.

We will submit materials and support that the increased recreation opportunities, wetlands management, wildlife protections, public safety measures and a one egress road can all be accomplished under the USFS along with Partnerships, Concessionaire, Private and Grant funds. These management tools were in place right before the USFS acquired the property.

One example: A local gravel pit owner donated 22 loads of road base, which was applied to the interior roads. The trucking was also donated. The community cares a lot for this property and are willing to partner with the Forest Service.

Also, we are quoting from the USDA Forest Service Land Acquisition Proposal to the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) dated November 8, 2019, which is interesting that we requested the FOIA documents of the proposal on August 22, 2026, they just arrived today!
"7.) Operations and Maintenance:

Redeveloping and updating the recreation facilities in concert with private partners will reduce the current costs the Forest incurs keeping the existing campground and trailheads maintained. This partnership will further allow for greatly expanded, and financially sustainable, public opportunities to camp, hike, boat, fish, horseback ride and hunt at the Lake and in the surrounding area on NFS lands while still protecting the resources and retaining the experiences the public values in this area."

This document proves that what the Forest Service submitted is exactly what the “Save the Lake” and our surrounding Community anticipated that the acquisition would accomplish. Somewhere here the lack of transparency, or intentional deception about CPW coming in the back door was evident.

When residents of Sweetwater and surrounding communities spent a year fundraising, sharing information, and garnering support for the Sweetwater Lake, it was to PRESERVE AND CONSERVE the lake from development. The “community” did not drive the fundraising effort for the land to become a HIGH VOLUME public recreational area by turning it into a state park. Had we, the “community,” known about these intentions we would have IMMEDIATELY stopped the “Save the Lake Campaign.” The intent of the Sweetwater Community was for the land to become a Forest Service property with conservation, increased recreation opportunities of semi-primitive camping and preserving some of the historical use of the land. During the fundraising effort, it was presented as saving the land from development, protecting it and preserving it forever. The community envisioned a Trapper’s Lake or Budes situation, where lodging and a restaurant would be operated by a concessionaire. The intention was to keep it as it was.

“It was a step into the past.” We all need this more than ever before. This may be the “last frontier” of protected land other than those delineated as Wilderness.

Another quote from Scott G Fitzwilliams Nov 8,2019 letter. “Successful acquisition of this property would expand public recreation opportunities such as access for camping, hiking, fishing and hunting, conserve water resources for listed aquatic species and habitat for sensitive avian species, and protect cultural resources such as a cave containing native pictographs. This proposed acquisition has received significant community support, including from the Congressional delegation for this area [Senator Michael Bennet (D), Senator Cory Gardner (R), and Representative Scott Tipton (R) }, who together have signed a bipartisan letter of support for this proposal.” So again, this is what the community understood and expected.

This is the time when things went South.

As outfitters we were given example Granger-Thye permits to study for the development of a permit for the Lake. They had restaurants, campgrounds, even one with horses etc. The conversation from the FS office began to change, we met and wrote multiple letters trying to figure out how to even survive with our operation. We’re sure this is the transition to the State concept.

Four days before for us and 3 days before for the County Commissioners, Governor Polis shows up and dedicates the Lake as the 43rd State Park.

The shock overwhelmed the Community, the Commissioner and the whole surrounding area. We were mistakenly after a meeting with all of the entities shown a bubble map of the plan that probably was designed before the acquisition. Then it disappeared. But guess what the #2 Alternative in 2026 mirrors that map! And with all of the 13 Community meetings in the Winter of 2022 not much was ever taken from the Community input. Only Equestrian parking.

Water and Trail:

In the last sale from the Conservation Fund to the LWCF all of the water rights were not transferred. Some of the rights remained with the Conservation fund. Not sure what happened to them.

We have irrigated 3.5 pastures, approximately 26 acres, for our 42 years. Barring 2 years when the former developers needed to prove the origin of water to the Corp of Engineers before developing. So 122 pvc wells were set into the upper pastures. We had to read all of these wells everyday for 2 Summer seasons. It did prove a couple springs in the upper end of the second pasture vs irrigation water was causing the water. This productive irrigated land should not be taken out of production for development due to impacts to wildlife, namely ungulates, and the well known statewide issue regarding the overall continuous loss of irrigated lands in the state of Colorado. *see Irrigation attachment regarding loss of irrigated land in Colorado.*

In Alternative #2 and #4 it speaks of piping the 1.5 mile Keep ditch and making it a public trail. For one thing our trail system servicing the area around the lake is safe and very serviceable to all of the directions necessary. Refer to the FS map in their proposal to the LWCF.

It is very evident that NO ONE designing this trail has ever ridden or walked up this ditch. It is so scary in spots that we no longer take guests up the ditch. And for a scarier experience ride up it on a bulldozer. Even experienced operators felt uncomfortable. It usually needs maintenance every couple of years.

We almost lost it off the side of the mountain approximately the same year (in the 80s) that the neighbors ditch on the other side of the drainage collapsed down 5" for a stretch of 100+', it had 5" cracks all above it on the hillside. It had to be completely reconstructed. The Keep ditch is much steeper terrain. Refer to the attachment: Geologic Hazards at the Sweetwater Lake Property, Dec 2023 (Houck 2023).

The Houck 2023 report cites how vulnerable the terrain is all along the North side of the lake. Piping the ditch and making it a public trail is both financially irresponsible and very dangerous.

In the past the Forest Service wanted to steer the public away from the Nellie's Nipple trail (original Name) because it is so steep. _We don't ever like to come down it. We will only take guests up it.. It is hard to keep your saddle and or yourself on the horse. Well this ditch trail leads right to it.

JUST BECAUSE A TRAIL IS DRAWN ON A MAP DOES NOT MEAN IT SHOULD BE SAFE OR OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Horse Operation, Barn and Equestrian Parking:

The horse outfitting needs to stay located by the road. Maybe on the North side of the Road. It can easily be in conjunction with the cattle permittees. A barn could be constructed with

housing above. Water and septic could be developed with the Guard Station. The turn around for trucks and trailers can be designed with the public parking on the South of the road.

One important reason is that most of the day horse riders park and in 5 minutes leave the property in all of the directions to access the BLM trail or the other National Forest trails. If it were a State Park this would be difficult when all they are wanting to access is our public trail, not spending any time except to park.

Moving the horse operation up into the second pasture, disturbing the amount of habitat would be devastating to the property. Taking away the irrigation would also be devastating to the health of the horses and grass production. Refer to the Irrigation Attachment. The road construction to allow horse trailers to pull up that grade and meet another trailer would take out practically all of the vegetation including the penstemon that is endangered. Eliminating the irrigation effects grazing for our healthy horses and then also the Wintering grounds for elk and deer.

For the 42 years we have been on the property we have always made the best of an old facility. We try to keep it simple. Everything was old 42 years ago. We have survived the 8 owners in that time of which none have wanted to make improvements.

Camping:

Camping should be kept on the original footprint. Extra camping can be arranged below the barn to the west. Then nursery Pasture should not be taken out of irrigation to accommodate camping. Refer again to the Irrigation attachment. All camping should remain semi primitive. That retains the character of the pristine location. We do not understand the need for separation of uses. The horses and restaurant have always been the most popular draw, for maybe the last 100 years.

Night Skies:

This concept should be implemented in whatever is decided for the property. We are very close to qualifying right now with some light fixture replacement. Campgrounds and some towns are accomplishing the designation.

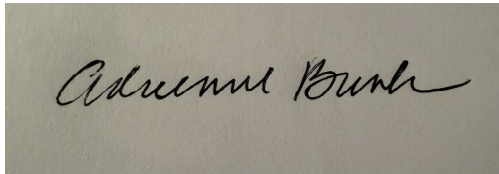
Public Safety Road:

With only one road in and out and the challenges of curves, blindspots, present level of traffic, mudslides, rocks, there is no way the numbers of visitors in Alternative #2 and #4 can be accommodated without serious consequences.

Conclusion

We as A J Brink Outfitters, Adrienne Brink and Aura Schlegel, are opposed to any State involvement. We feel that the USFS can manage the Pristine Asset that they received with help of the Stewardships, Private funds, grants and Volunteers. There are too many issues to comment on so we do hope many others in our community have already commented on.

Sincerely,

A rectangular image showing a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored, textured background. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "Adrienne Brink".

Adrienne Brink
and Aura Schlegel
Owners of A J Brink Outfitters

FW: acreages and irrigated land lost

From [REDACTED]

Date Wed 9/23/2026 7:48 PM

To [REDACTED]

 1 attachment (1 MB)

pasture acreages.docx;

Sent from my Galaxy

----- Original message -----

From: [REDACTED]

Date: 9/22/26 4:10 PM (GMT-07:00)

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: acreages and irrigated land lost

Here's the acreages (attached).

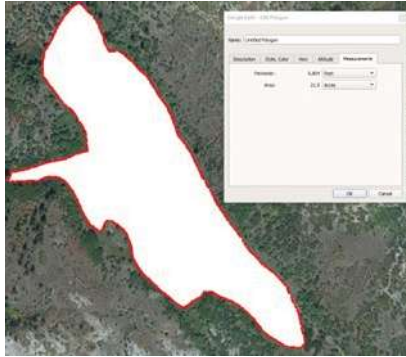
Land loss facts and quotes:

“Acting CDA Agricultural Commissioner Robert Sakata highlighted that Colorado has seen a significant loss of irrigated farmland, with a 32.2% decrease from 1997 to 2022, amounting to a reduction of 1,085,000 acres.

Less than 4 percent of the land in Colorado is irrigated (Colorado Ag Statistics). Yet that tiny amount of irrigated land produces an abundance of alfalfa, corn, potatoes, melons, peaches, grapes, barley, and forage for grazing livestock. We need to keep every remaining acre of irrigated land that we have.

Between 2017 and 2022, Colorado lost more farmland than any other state in the country, shedding roughly 1.6 million acres and watching more than 3,000 farms close their gates.
<https://rockymountaindispatch.com/2026/01/26/the-fastest-farmland-loss-in-america-whats-driving-colorados-agricultural-decline/>

<https://www.cbsnews.com/colorado/news/colorado-loses-more-farmland-farmers-blame-state-policies/>



Pastures:

12.5 acres - Upper Pasture

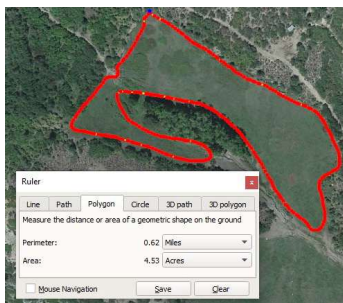
4.5 acres - Middle Pasture

4.25 acres - Lower Pasture

4.2 acres - Nursery Pasture

25.5 acres total

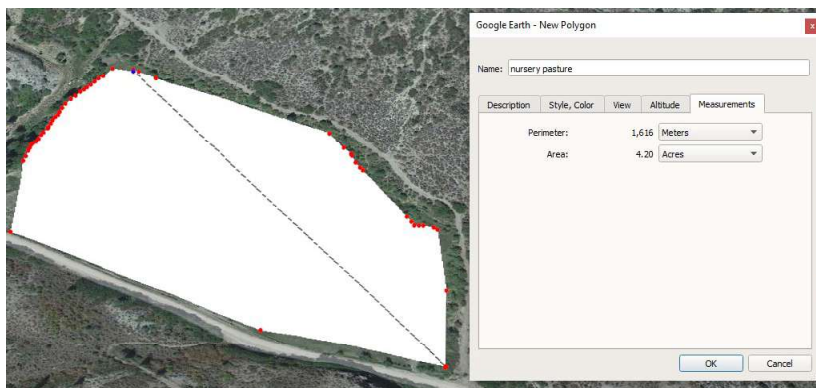
Middle Pasture



Lower pasture



Nursery pasture



2.5 acres - North of restaurant - sagebrush; currently un-used

