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First name: Charles

Last name: Sepmeier

Organization:

Title:

Comments: As a full time resident for twenty years I support the position of the Sweetwater Community Club (the non-profit "HOA Equivalent" here) Board of Directors and Sweetwater Lake Action Committee regarding the unanimous rejection of the Forest Service's and State of Colorado's development proposal to develop the Sweetwater Lake area for all of the reasons listed in the Board's filing.

The proposed development at Sweetwater Lake's impacts on Safety, Wildlife, Road and Traffic, Environmental, Family Ranchers, Overall Site Size and Design, Volume of People / Users, Local's Access, Water Impacts, Negative Overflow Parking Impacts, Negative Impacts on the Neighboring Community and the Incompatibility with Historic Uses of Property (see attached document) are all of great concern to my family.

Since the Board has drafted, approved and will submit / has submitted a detailed multipage document that fully details all of the community's objections to the proposed development, I will not repeat all of these objections in detail here but instead focus on and elaborate my thoughts regarding a few specific points included in the Board's filing.

1. The restaurant at Sweetwater Lake has been the heart of our community, open for over 100 years. Replacing the restaurant with a "lodge" like the one up brush creek (Sylvan Lake) for "administrative, education, interpretive spaces" does not support the historic and cultural type of facility/environment.

The proposal to replace the restaurant with what is basically an office that might sell Snickers Bars and overpriced sugar-sodas indicates just one occasion of the USFS / CPW / EVLT all "Missing The Point Entirely" in the USFS / CPW proposed Lake operational plan.

Sweetwater Lake is at the upper end of a box canyon at the dead end of a seventeen mile long road trip from Interstate 70 and some thirty miles from the closest source of supplies, food or drink, 10 miles of which is the SOLE ACCESS / EGRESS to and from the proposed development. There is some question regarding the legality of developing a state park with a single route of access / egress per CpW regulations. Past responses to fires and medical emergencies have been timed and the responses to calls made immediately require one hour before responders from Gypsum arrive on scene. Our own experience over two decades confirm these lengths of time to reach the Lake from Gypsum, where the nearest grocery and other sources of essentials are located.

Historically, the restaurant and its porch and deck, by my own surveys of visitors there over twenty years, were

THE ONLY REASON some 80% of visitors visited the Lake.

Many visitors were senior citizens who had been visiting for decades from all over the country, including people who'd gotten married at the Lake restaurant and Lodge, who then brought their children and grandchildren to Sweetwater over the years. The restaurant WAS their destination. They couldn't / didn't camp, hike or ride horses but could enjoy an afternoon lunch or evening supper while their children and / or grandchildren engaged in these activities. The ability to enjoy a quality sit-down meal at the lake was the highlight of their trip. Newcomers were always surprised to find such a wonderful amenity awaiting their enjoyment upon arrival, finding it unique in their travels - because it was entirely unique! I've also met many campers dining at the restaurant who were thrilled to have found such an amenity available, noting how much it improved their experience. The presence of high quality, reasonably priced sit-down dining at the restaurant was in many cases the main reason they returned to Sweetwater.

The closing of the restaurant and construction of an office with a lobby containing some static displays and perhaps a couple of vending machines staffed by random government employees rather than long-time local operators versed in the history of the lake through generations of family of living here is simply willful ignorance of the historic appeal of the Lake's usage, at best.

Since the proposal includes improvements to water and sanitation as required by the expected increase in visitors, rebuilding of the small restaurant operated by the local contractor would be a relatively minor investment towards preservation of the main reason a majority of visitors visited the Lake over many decades.

To ignore this misses the entire point regarding the Lake's appeal as a destination.

2. The USFS states that they need the state's participation "because they (CPW) has money to develop the property."

The local communities, both individuals and governments, donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to "save the lake" in order to protect it from development!

That this solicitation and use of funds has resulted in massive development proposals instead may constitute fraud which may result in litigation.

Regarding CPW's addition to the USFS team, the USFS through Mr. Fitzsimmons and others, has told the community that "we need the state because they can afford personnel to manage the large crowds of people who would flock to the lake once it became public."

It has been public for $2\frac{1}{2}$ years now, and there are no flocks of people. As Jeff Shroll, Eagle County manager has mentioned, the numbers are now lower than they were in 2020.

Without CPW presence, development and marketing, there will be no damaging numbers that were originally predicted. The development and marketing of a recreation area of the size proposed will therefore detract from the enjoyment of this unique undeveloped environment and destroy the character of the area. Given that the CPW marketing slogan is "Keep Colorado Wild" this development is in direct conflict with this motto.

Once in state management, what prevents expanding the "park" in the future? The plan does not call out specifics or have limits on future development.

3. The ten mile long (seven miles of which are dirt) access road which is maintained by Eagle County has a posted speed limit of 25 MPH. This limit is essential due to the presence of open-range livestock, large and small wildlife, bicyclists and pedestrians using the road.

A full traffic and road width study (especially regarding adherence to applicable Code standards) must be conducted before any construction begins or capacities are formalized, given that the proposal estimates of 375 round trip vehicle trips daily (75 cars X 2.5 people average per vehicle X 2 trips) plus the actual average traffic as measured by eagle county in recent years of over 200 vehicle trips per day will exceed the present designation of the road as a "rural feeder connector" - which limits daily traffic to 400 trips per day.

The State/USFS must be required to define the increased volume of traffic expected and build out the road to pass a volume of traffic that is well below what the road can legally handle, since the road is not in compliance with many federal, state and local regulations regarding width, grading, intersection and corner visibility or corner turn radius in many locations under its present designation. Specifically, the width shrinks to a single lane at several locations, the curve radius and lane separation are well under Code at several other locations - for example, the uphill/curve visibility at the CR 151-150 intersection is non-existent due to the intersection's placement and design and, with increased traffic, this will result in serious accidents as drivers attempt to enter CR 150 at this point.

I have personally been run off the road several times by RV's (both recreational pull-behind trailers and self-

contained) who's drivers were operating on the wrong side or center of both the dirt and paved section of the road. Local cattle ranchers and equestrian operators know the hazards of the road; they keep to the right and give way when necessary. People unfamiliar with the road seem to think they are "all alone in the country" and routinely drive in the center. Increasing the number of these vehicles will result in risk of collisions, injuries and fatalities. Sweetwater Road is not capable of safely meeting the needs of the proposed increase in vehicular traffic.

I could elaborate upon the entire list of Board objections as they are all well considered, valid and fact-based, but as stated previously, I'll simply attach them to this letter. I urge you to take them all seriously.

Sincerely,

Charles W Sepmeier