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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

Thank you for reviewing my/our responses to this process. The following is a quick summary of my concerns for the Sweetwater Valley.

1. There is no denying that any new development will have a negative environmental impact on the entire Sweetwater valley. Substantial increased traffic alone will create a drastic difference in dust, which can only be controlled with mag-chloride to a certain point, and then massive amounts of dust return to neighboring areas.

2. Wildlife (everything from large elk herds to rare birds), flora & fauna will be negatively impacted from increased/new development, which carries an inevitable massive increase in marketing, and therefore, increased usage & trampling of these pristine, sensitive areas. No matter how the area is designed, more people will impact a current delicate balance in each of these areas until permanent damage is done over time.

3. The quality of life is dramatically affected for residents of this valley, which is contradictory to the statement made on the CPW website regarding development of new Parks and how they benefit the local residents. Helping unfamiliar motorists get unstuck during the long winters is a never-ending process, which already has become somewhat of a nuisance, since local neighbors have no choice but to stop all personal activity to help those in need due to a lack of cellular service (and the realization that these motorists cannot just be left to hopefully survive). In addition, kids ride their bikes, scooters, walk 4H animals, etc. up and down our valley roads, and it will only be a short matter of time before some local child is killed due to the increase in both traffic volume and speeds on our quiet country roads. In addition, there is abundant wildlife everywhere in this valley, and almost all outsiders have no idea about this volume and the critical need to avoid speeding on these dangerous roads. The agricultural roots of this valley run deep and should be preserved at all costs, as ranchers are a disappearing and dying breed, and this development is a huge step in erasing this long-standing heritage, which seems to go against every message taught to young folks these days.

4. Safety is a huge concern for reasons listed above. In addition, the road was never designed for the type of volume being proposed by the CPW's development plan. There is plenty of wildlife carnage at current volumes, and this is only going to drastically increase, having potential catastrophic consequences when cars are being totaled by large animals, and/or cars swerving off of steep embankments, or into oncoming traffic to avoid hitting the numerous critters we see crossing the road every single day. I have lived in rural areas for about 35 of my 54 years on earth, and I had never hit a single deer until I moved to Sweetwater. A deer jumped right in front of me during my first year in this valley, and fortunately, it just missed coming through the windshield. I quickly learned the importance of speed and attentiveness, but I can only imagine what this looks like with non-stop, inexperienced, first-timers at unprecedented volumes and speeds. Also, single-lane blind corners are abundant and an obvious detriment to development. I personally have almost been completely run off of the road numerous times by ignorant folks not paying attention & going too fast. During our first year of living in this valley, we had to evacuate due to the forest fire, and this quickly became a scary situation, since we live in a box canyon. There is only one way in and one way out. This should be a huge concern when attempting to bring in massive amounts of people into this potential death trap. Lastly, there is a tremendous amount of traffic parked on both sides of the river road during the summer rafting season, and this is already a dangerous spot, prone to accidents at our current low volume of traffic. See attached for a sampling of pictures.

5. I was a member of the Sweetwater Working Group (SWG), and I/we were excited to be providing such valuable feedback during the course of these meetings over many months. However, after numerous meetings it became apparent that the USFS & the CPW really had zero interest in our concerns about this development. Sure,

they seemed to listen to generic feedback about campground sites, cabins, etc., but there really did not appear to be any interest in an engaging process with the locals affected by this process, which is a complete contradiction of what is claimed on the CPW(?) website regarding the ultimate enhancement of the local community through this process. It finally became clear that we were just a necessary cog in completing next steps, especially since our strong concerns were, at times, even ridiculed and demeaned through the process. Instead of witnessing a desire to listen to our true concerns, we witnessed a group of individuals hell-bent on ramrodding an agenda that would yield to nothing. This was the perception of most, if not all, on the working group, which was a complete shock to what we were expecting. Yes, we understood that we couldn't just "get our way", but there was minimal, if any, actual attempt to negotiate and/or compromise, or even show an ounce of desire to seek solutions to our concerns. (I personally did a structural analysis on the restaurant building and found a way to reinforce all areas necessary to meet current building code requirements, and hence, save the historic building. I'm a licensed structural engineer in the State of Colorado (CO 1346337)). We even had submitted our own site layout, which had increased the number of camping spots, and for some reason the USFS appears to continually and deceptively claim that we should be happy that their design is actually less camping spots than ours, all while ignoring the fact that they have exploded on cabins and sprawl across massive amounts of acreage over many grazing pastures, which ultimately was an enormous overall increase compared to our conceptual design. Absolutely shocking and shameful in my/our opinion. We had decided that, although we felt the best solution included keeping the area as traditionally laid out & utilized, with the horses, stables, pastures and restaurant, that if we were threatened with tearing down buildings (which we were), then we ultimately would prefer to have all buildings demolished and the traditional services would be sacrificed to preserve the area as much as possible. Even though we would love to continue the small restaurant, we are willing to sacrifice everything to truly save the area from this massive development.

6. Lastly, since day one all I ever heard from Scott (USFS) was that the USFS had no money, so the CPW was needed to manage the area because "...they are coming." Per Scott during numerous meetings. This meant that now that this is public property, the people will now be coming in droves, and all of this development is needed to manage this mad rush. It has now been 2+ years of public USFS land, and they still have not been coming. I drove around the campground at 10am on July 4, 2024, assuming peak season, and there were still two open spots at the campground! This is as simple as black & white. If you don't build it and don't advertise it, they are not coming in droves. If you build it, and you advertise it, then yes, they might start coming in tremendous numbers. Now which approach seems more prudent to preserve such a pristine, delicate and peaceful experience like none other? This is basic logic. Why not truly provide the public with something different, with one of the most peaceful and enriching environments they may ever experience on public land?

Ultimately, we used to have a desire to work with the USFS & CPW to reach an amicable solution to the many major concerns that still exist, but based on our experience with each of these entities, we do not want a state park, we do not want anything larger than what our group has proposed (which could be easily managed by a concessionaire, especially one who knows and has been a steward of the land for 40 years!), and we desire to continue with the small existing restaurant, which is easily salvageable, and all advertising/marketing should be kept to an absolute minimum, for reasons stated above. If this compromise is not possible, then we do not want any development whatsoever, even if that means removal of all buildings.

I apologize for the quick comments and potential grammar issues, as I'm trying to get this quickly completed while traveling extensively, where I was hoping to have plenty of time to complete. Yet here we are at the wire. Thanks for your review.

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