

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 7/22/2024 6:00:00 AM

First name: Tamara

Last name: Stuart

Organization:

Title:

Comments: July 22, 2024

To:

Heather Noel, Acting Forrest Supervisor, White River National Forest

We own the property better known formerly as Anderson Camps, a well recognized local landmark at the intersection of Sweetwater and the Colorado River Roads. We have owned this property since 1979.

Gone are the days when it was safe for campers to walk along the side of the road to fish in the pond or to run the horses from the pasture on one side of the Colorado River Road to the barn on the other side of the road. And yes, there were times when one or two would break free and enjoy a few minutes of glorious freedom running down the middle of the River Road with the wranglers in hot pursuit! Those days are long gone. Today, that scenario would end in a slaughter.

Simply stated, both the Colorado River and Sweetwater roads already host traffic flows they were never designed to handle. The target numbers being discussed for the proposed state park will extensively exacerbate the current problems while decreasing the quality of life and safety for locals.

#### Traffic In General

[bull] Over the last decade, there has been a substantial increase in the number of local residents accessing both the Colorado River Road and Sweetwater Road. The once relatively quiet intersection now has identifiable rush hour traffic patterns as the increased number of local residents travel to and from work. For years, there was a school bus stop at the same intersection. However, now, no extended bus service is provided for the children living on either of these two roads, adding multiple vehicles since carpooling is not an option for everyone with such great distances between homes and varied schedules.

[bull] The current traffic signage is disregarded by many. It is rare that residents or other service vehicles come to a complete stop at the stop sign at the base of Sweetwater Road before driving onto the Colorado River Road. Usually, it is a not-so-slow rolling stop with a mere glance to the left, and there have been several near misses, especially if the roads are icy. Additionally, the No Parking signs placed at the intersection are frequently disregarded as drivers stop to check their trailers, decide on directions or coordinate with other vehicles traveling as a group. The result is the equivalent of a rural traffic jam and a potential accident.

[bull] Wildlife frequently cross both roads in search of water from the Sweetwater Creek or the Colorado River. Cattle drives still take place on both roads and with open range designation it's not unusual to find random cattle on the roads.

#### Recreational Traffic

[bull] Rafting, paddle boarding, tubing and fishing on the Colorado River, have increased monumentally, bringing multitudes of vehicles towing rafts and shuttling vehicles up and down the road looking for input and outtake locations, not all of them safely located. Once the Cottonwood launch area is full, cars and trailers can be found parked on both sides of the already narrow road and beyond. At the same time, rafters themselves frequently dart out onto the road to cross without always watching for traffic. [bull] Those choosing to use inter tubes or pool

floaties are frequently seen riding in the back of a pickup truck and dropped off at random locations, sometimes simply stopping in the middle of the road as the riders unload. Those same riders can often be seen later walking or hitchhiking along the side of the road carrying their flotation devices if they had to exit the river early.

[bull] Camping in the area is another activity that has increased. While a truck with a camper top or small trailer have always been familiar and expected sights on the Colorado River Road, the large RVs, some trailing a family car or off-road vehicles are not, and the road is far too narrow to accommodate these types of vehicles. It is also not uncommon to find these large motor homes parked randomly on the sides of the road instead of finding official camping sites, making safe travel and visibility an issue. [bull] More recently, road biking and motorcycles have become exceptionally popular. A few years ago, local residents might have encountered an occasional hardy road biker, perhaps traveling in a pair and usually respectful of sharing the road with motorized vehicles. That scenario, however, has changed substantially, with groups of 10 or more often traveling together, sometimes two or more abreast.

[bull] The Colorado River Road is now frequently a designated course for bike races, and there are numerous online posts for road bikers and motorcyclists recommending and giving tips for riding the River Road as a scenic adventure. mybicycleroute.com, for example, specifies, "Just stay toward the center of the road (the cleanest) and avoid the soft gravel shoulders." The concept of "shared road space" has become a matter of entitlement for both riders and drivers. With little to no shoulder on the Colorado River Road passing even one rider becomes a problematic process. Due to the number of blind curves and no passing zones, drivers are forced to either anger the bicyclist by driving at the significantly slower speed set by the biker or pass them illegally and dangerously. Tempers run short. This current situation is a tragedy waiting to happen!

#### Increased Semi Truck Usage

[bull] As rural roads, truck traffic is a given on both the Colorado River Road and Sweetwater Road. Stock trailers, tractors, road equipment, construction trucks and trailers carrying hay are all expected. Covid brought an increase of delivery trucks to the area. Of greater concern, is the substantial increase of semi trucks trying to beat the clock by shortcutting through to I-70 from Hwys 131 and 134. The recent improvements made to the Colorado River Road above this intersection, facilitated this route. The posted speed limit here is 25 miles per hour. We have yet to witness one of these trucks, or most vehicles for that matter, traveling at that speed.

The problems that will be created by further increasing the traffic flow to the park combined with natural local growth will impose significantly more hazards. Neither the Colorado River or Sweetwater roads are located in areas that lend themselves toward a simple widening of the roads.

We are opposed to further development of the park until these issues are adequately reviewed with in depth traffic and capacity studies for both the Colorado River and Sweetwater roads and any safety recommendations actually implemented before proceeding.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott and Tamara B. Stuart