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Organization:

Title:

Comments: As the longtime managers of Sweetwater Lake Resort, and residents of the Sweetwater Community, we have several concerns about the scoping documents and plans for the future of Sweetwater Lake.

Capacity

We originally welcomed an average of 60 people per day at the private resort. About once or twice a month, we would host an event of up to 200 people. So, the 250 person per day average presented in the scoping process is four times more people than historic use.

This is too many for our road to the lake. It is too drastic of a change for our community. The community is unanimous that they don't want another Sylvan Lake State Park located here!

Cabins

We are concerned that the proposed plans do not preserve the historical cabins..

There are currently six houses with 1 to 3 bedrooms plus bathrooms and kitchens. There are also four motel units, with bathrooms. Before the sale to the USFS, we (AJ Brink Outfitters) rented out these popular houses. The public has enjoyed using this type of lodging for over 60 years. We feel they will be very disappointed to find primitive cabins with no running water, heat, nor electricity as per the USFS plans.

We have seen these types of dry cabins at Sylvan Lake and they serve a different clientele. They are essentially tent camping with a cot and walls.

The Sweetwater cabins are especially popular during hunting season. The hunters don't hunt on the property, but use it to access the National Forest and BLM. It is cold in the fall, and the hunters prefer the heated lodging with a kitchen. We do not have hunters that want tents. Tent hunters generally pack into the backcountry to a tent-equipped camp. Not having wet cabins available significantly impacts our hunting business.

The Sweetwater cabins are structures built between the 1920's to the 1960's. The guests enjoyed the step into the past even if it was just the 1950's era. The cabins are currently furnished in early American garage sale in an attempt to capture that nostalgic feeling. The electricity is simple and there is no WiFi. These cabins provided a historic atmosphere and the opportunity to experience how quiet and peaceful life was without the hustle and bustle of our present lifestyles. There is no social media, not even television nor radio. Many families found it refreshing and healing.

The experiences families enjoyed so much were game playing, reading, relaxing with storytelling from elders, baking together in the kitchen, campfires (and learning to cook over one), star gazing, hiking, horseback riding, fishing from the shore, and rowboating. Oftentimes multiple family groups would come together in a combination of cabins, a camper, and some tent camping.

We are opposed to removing almost all of the buildings to construct new ones. We feel that several are salvageable and can be remodeled at less cost than building new ones. For example, the Motel Units have good septic and could be used for employee housing with rustic wood siding and a wooden deck added. Even without the restaurant, this Motel location is good and won't impede on other recreational activities,

The Hilltop Hilton is so historic with its hand hewn logs and wood chinks. It could be resettled back a bit and shorn up. If not, it should not be destroyed but be offered to the public to salvage or move. It can be dismantled

and moved to private land.

The other historic houses should be evaluated on a case by case basis to determine whether it is more economically feasible and historically desirable to keep them rather than replace them.

Restaurant

We are concerned that the proposed plans do not preserve the historic restaurant. A restaurant has been here for over 100 years (the current restaurant is the third one). We served locally sourced bison and beef. We provided full service breakfast, lunch, and dinner 7 days a week for 6 months every year. We attracted visitors from Aspen to Vail, and further. Many locals from nearby towns frequented our business. A trip to the lake restaurant was an annual birthday gift or anniversary get-together for many townsfolk.

The restaurant was accessed by fishermen, hikers, campers, renters in the cabins, horseback riders, and sightseers. Our restaurant was a community and tourist gathering space. In addition, it was a focal point for wildlife viewing with spotting scopes and bird feeders. It operated as a small history museum with photographs, newspaper clippings, and scrapbooks open for the public.

Hunters need more than just a sandwich bar level of food service. They need a full breakfast, sometimes before sunrise, before heading out to a day of hunting, plus a generous sack lunch, and then a hearty dinner in the evening, often after dark.

If the current restaurant needs to be removed, a new restaurant can be built across the road where an old lodge was located. This is a previously disturbed area of cottonwoods. Part of the foundation can still be seen. Water and electricity is easily accessible.

We have seen the Granger/Thye permit regulations around a restaurant operating on Forest Service property and hope to work with that.

Without a restaurant, the community loses a valuable resource and gathering space.

Camping

Previously, the Forest Service had 8 - 9 campsites and we rented out about 5 - 6 additional private spots, for a total of 13 - 15 campsites. The new plans offer 20 campsites and 10 dry cabins (which are basically more campsites). This is double the amount of previous campsites and spreads them out more.

We need less campsites and to keep them more primitive. No campers or motorhomes larger than 18 feet. No electric hookups. No generators allowed.

We propose keeping the camping at the original level of 14 campsites and relocate it to the disturbed area by the old Forest Service cabin. This is a highly humanly disturbed area as one of the previous tenants used the area to graze her horses and cattle. In addition, water lines already reach the cabin.

Dumpstations

We should not offer dump stations on the lake property. This is not environmentally sound. There is limited to no place to dispose of the sewage. Previously, it would have been hauled through Glenwood Canyon to South Canyon, but even that 40 mile haul is no longer open. Emptying a vault toilet costs approximately \$800, if there is even someone to haul it. There is no compost facility in Eagle, Garfield, or Pitkin County. Neither Summit County nor Steamboat will take waste anymore. Human sewage has to be hauled over the Continental Divide to McDonald Farms in Denver! This is an outrageous cost for the state, puts more large trucks on the highway, and

negatively affects the environment of the whole state!

Lakeshore

Sweetwater, a natural lake, has a different shoreline from other state park reservoirs. There is no beach, nor a place to put one. There is no shallow, safe swimming area and the mountain water is cold! There is no shoreline to picnic, walk, or lounge and barely a spot to fish. It will be very challenging to develop some type of disabled access. Visitors wanting a typical state park experience will be disappointed.

Other

As many of our buildings were not entirely accessible by people with disabilities, we accommodated many handicapped, wounded vets, and children with disabilities in several ways. We built ramps to some buildings. We were able to guide vets on hunts, pack trips and day rides. Families with disabled children could go out in rowboats and even ride horses. We have long served this part of the public.

As a state park with 250 visitors a day, a reservation system will need to be in place. This area will no longer easily be used by our community as a gathering place.

Whatever plan is decided upon through this NEPA process, it should be designed in phases. One phase should be established and held in place for an extended time period to see how the community adjusts before moving on to the next phase.

Conclusion

There are not many places at the end of the road left in Colorado. Do we think it is our place to displace another?

After this plan is implemented, the planners, who never actually experienced what was the historic use, will be off to their next job. But our dead end, quiet road community will be completely changed. We will have to live with a development that is not even accessible to us!