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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Sweetwater Lake Recreation Management and Development Project:

Comments on the USFS Notice of Intent and Scoping Documents describing Draft Plans and Ideas

Thank you USFS and CO DPW Staff for all of the hard work, analysis, public input opportunities (though I missed the 6/5/24 and 6/6/24 in-person meetings) and the public information of this multi-agency effort. There were and still are a lot of problems and challenges to solve and I applaud the efforts and have my fingers crossed that this creative idea will work.

In general, I fully support what I believe to be the basic goals of this project:

- To maintain traditional recreational opportunities
- To minimize impact of the ecosystem and, especially areas designated as "sensitive"
- To minimize conflicts from potential increased use

Now to get to more specifics as described in the NOI and Scoping summary list:

Food Service: I disagree with the idea of a "small scope of food services." If this project is to truly meet the goal to "maintain traditional recreational opportunities," that should include reviving a full service restaurant as similar as possible (while ADA compliant) as the old Brinks' café was. While some may say that such a community meeting and dining place is not "recreational," I would challenge that. To drive up the canyon, meet or bring friends (local and otherwise) and have a meal together - a real meal - is to recreate, whether before, after or without a hike, ride or boat outing.

Cabins and Campsites: I also disagree with what appears to be an expansion of the number of cabins and campsites. I have reviewed the map, understand and support the disbursement (further away from the lake) to minimize impact. But these opportunities should not result in more people coming to stay. That apparent possibility seems counter to the overall goals.

I do support converting the current USFS campsites to day use.

How will all of these be managed, especially the overnight sites and cabins? Will there be a reservation system? I hope so. And what will be the allowed length of vehicles, with particular consideration of the canyon road?

ADA Accommodations: Unless I missed it, I found no mention of meeting and/or expanding accessibility options -- day use, food, overnight or equestrian. I would support accessibility improvements as much as is possible without negatively impacting the environment and ecosystems at Sweetwater.

Wildlife and Other Ecosystem or Environmental Protections: I fully support closing, or significantly limiting access to wetlands, and restrictions that assure that wildlife habitat and corridors are protected.

I saw no mention of access to or changes in access to the petroglyphs or other archaeological or indigenous sites. Are these in the "sensitive" area to be closed off? I have never made that trek, would love to see these wonders and would like to know how this will or won't be possible in the future. Again, reservations? Guided hikes?

Equestrian Options: Does the proposal to "move the current equestrian area, provide new barns and stables and create up to seven equestrian campsites" mean that Brinks Outfitters can or will be able to continue operation of

their trail rides and outfitting from this location? If not, what does it mean for them?

I do fully support creating equestrian campsites.

Lastly, I also saw no clear or specific mention of how public access will be handled (mentioned above, but critical) to assure that:

-The site is not overused

-Traffic on the canyon road will not be heavily or significantly increased, not to mention vehicles that are too big for the road

Let me reiterate that I do see that the goals and intent of this project is to "Save the Lake" and I want to see that effort succeed. As a resident of Gypsum, CO for "only" 11 years, I already miss the opportunities that I enjoyed and am so glad that Sweetwater did not become a private, un-accessible development.

Please continue to include noticing me of other opportunities to participate and comment.

Thank you,

Cookie Murphy/Pettee