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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Thank you for soliciting and accepting comments on the Sweetwater State proposal.

I am a resident of Glenwood Springs and a long-time visitor to the Sweetwater Lake drainage, enjoying hiking to Hack and Johnny Meyer lakes, Sweetwater Trail, and Turret and Rim Lake Trails from Hilltop, trail rides with Brinks and canoeing on the lake. I was married at the girl's camp property adjacent to the lake 32 years ago. I also know several residents of Sweetwater and the Colorado River Road.

Thank you for considering my comments and all comments from concerned citizens carefully and seeking to understand the concerns and requests for revision. This is what your process is all about, and ensuring that many of the proposed items are not a foregone conclusion.

Respecting the resource and protecting what is special about it:

Sweetwater is a very quiet place with very dark skies, abundant wildlife and relatively few visitors. The project as proposed appears to use a state parks cookie-cutter "template" rather than being responsive to the unique natural setting and sensitive resources at Sweetwater. It is perfectly fine to deviate from the template used on the front range, western slope, Rifle Gap and even Sylvan Lake. Sweetwater is a chance to show that State Parks can be sensitive to the setting as well as being sensitive to the impact on the human residents of the Sweetwater Creek drainage. I concur with many locals that the park development as proposed would forever alter the experience that makes Sweetwater special and memorable - it's quiet, the darkness, the relatively few visitors.

Being sensitive to the setting will require scaling down the scope of the proposal.

I request you seriously consider the following revisions to downsize the current proposal to a more appropriate level. You would be successful in accommodating existing and new users but not end up spoiling what you are attempting to "preserve" and present. It's my preference this not be happening but I know the story of how we all got to this place with the USFS purchase, the partnership with state parks, etc. Well-intentioned at the start. So hopefully all will extra hard to get back to that place of good intention.

Specifically -

Offer no electric services for campers. Most have generators and are self-sufficient.

install NO electric lights, only solar in a few locations.

No flush toilets or sinks. USFS has many, many successful campgrounds that don't offer those conveniences and are still popular and visited.

No dump station

No more than 20 spaces and of limited size to avoid behemoth RV's

Sites are only available by reservation, to avoid the first-come-first-serve driving all the way up and all the way down if full.

Make people truly camp, encourage that skill and experience. We bemoan the loss of connection to the wilderness and natural world and then bring all kinds of toys, campers, electronics and so on into the wild. Keep it as natural as possible, and again, there are plenty of examples of successful campgrounds with primitive facilities. If someone needs "connection" or "things", Gypsum (Costco) is a hop away, keep the action down there.

Remove the cabins or remodel those that can be but the final project is no more than 6 rental buildings

No lodge, no restaurant, and only a moderate sized building that can be staffed for licenses or daily matters or maybe a few boat rentals.

Some picnic shelters with shade structures for DIY meal outings instead of a restaurant and the noise, trash, lights, smells, upkeep, traffic that go with that.

The old restaurant was fun novelty but it wasn't always open, wasn't always kept up, vendors changed. Brinks is a great lessee, but players change as time goes on.

Avoid that hassle on a public property.

Those uses also necessitate parking which impacts the landscape, runoff, views, dust or increased temperature if asphalt. Scaling down the uses scales down the parking numbers necessary.

Make people truly camp, encourage that.

Keep the equestrian use so it can provide what it needs to for horses, staff and a few campsites (and maybe there is a small snack bar with that) but manage the use so that if vendors change over time, terms are very clear or revocable.

Improve the road up to Hilltop because with this change, that use level will change, a fact. Enlarge the parking at top a bit, grade the road and sign that it is high-clearance, 4wd.

Provide interpretive information and trail signs as proposed.

Maintain a percentage as natural areas, but larger than currently proposed.

Reconsider the 20-year special use term, maybe make it 10 or 12.

In summary, err on the side of "Less is More" - you will not regret it, as these places are harder to find and easier to spoil.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of my comments and all others that know Sweetwater and hold it near and dear.