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Comments: Sweetwater Lake Recreation Management and Development Project - Response to Emergencies?

Access to Sweetwater Lake requires drivers top navigate over 16 miles of road alongside the Colorado River & Sweetwater creek waterways. When an incident occurs along this stretch of road, distressed drivers often rely on the local community to assist in contacting emergency services.

Increasing the average per person traffic visiting Sweetwater Lake above the 60 person per day average to an anticipated 250 persons per day would be irresponsible without first having an infrastructure and emergency resources available to support the increased number of visitors. Sweetwater Road was not developed for, and does not have the capacity to, carry the surplus traffic anticipated from increased visitation of Sweetwater Lake. The current road conditions must be addressed prior to growing the number of recreational vehicles/trailers/RVs on Sweetwater Road in order to provide safe passage. In addition to having safe passage, the increased number of drivers along this stretch of road will need access to cell phone service in order to contact emergency services in distressed situations.

Before deliberately increasing the number of persons visiting Sweetwater, the safety concerns surrounding an emergency response and/or evacuations must be addressed. All emergency situations become increasingly complicated with additional visitor counts to Sweetwater Lake. Being located at the end of a "Box Canyon " with a single road access route, it would be prudent to have an established plan and the necessary infrastructure in place to support a safe evacuation of the Sweetwater community in the event of an emergency. There are major concerns from the community regarding the proposed increased visitation numbers and how they pose a threat to the community, and the safety of those living in and visiting the Sweetwater Lake area. Without addressing the access conditions and evacuation/passage concerns on Sweetwater Road, the community and visitors will have been placed in imminent danger when an emergency situation develops. Increasing the number of visitors will exponentially increase the number of incidents, (Wildfire, car accident, medical emergency, serious injury, etc) and the requirement of surrounding Police, Fire, Medical Emergency teams to respond to these incidents in the remote Sweetwater location will pull resources and putting the greater community's safety in jeopardy. We ask that you strongly reconsider the Sweetwater Lake Recreation Management and Development Project's efforts to increase visitation numbers and the promotion of Sweetwater Lake. The current visitation numbers have created a balance allowing many to enjoy the natural sanctuary, while preserving the habitats of the wildlife that live there. Most of all, the community asks you to consider the danger brought onto the community and the potential loss of life that could be caused by over-occupancy of this beautiful single-accessed box canyon.

Warmest Regards,

Joel Walker Reliance Inc. Property Management. 970.390.3266