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Organization:
Title:
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White River National Forest, c/o Jamie Werner

Attn. Sweetwater Lake Management and Development Project

900 Grand Avenue Glenwood Springs, CO 81601

RE: Comments on "Sweetwater Lake Recreation Management and Development Project"

Dear Ms. Werner,

Please accept my comments as you and your team prepare an EIS for the Sweetwater Lake property. As a 30-plus year user of Sweetwater Lake and its environment, I believe I have a reasonable amount of experience with the area to make meaningful comments.

Quoting directly from the WRNF introduction letter, "The purpose of the proposed action is to provide the public a natural resource based recreational and educational experience at Sweetwater Lake that is reflective of the culture and history of the area while managing visitation at an appropriate scale for the long term viability of the 832 acres surrounding the lake and its resources." No "need "is identified in this letter of introduction.

The proposed recreation infrastructure is reminiscent of a state park with its modern urban style improvements. Sweetwater Lake is a unique and extraordinary place. Its hydrology, wildlife community, dark skies, quiet and serenity make it unique to the region and the state. Imprinting the lake and its surroundings with the state park footprint will forever diminish the lake and surroundings from its current and historic character. Additionally, the cumulative impacts of the park including traffic, noise, water quality diminution will be detrimental to residents who live in the valley along the 12 mile long dead end Sweetwater Road.

My preference, a limited action alternative, would leave Sweetwater Lake largely as it is today with only minor safety and maintenance improvements to buildings, roads, and other facilities. Adding a small primitive campground with 10 to 15 spaces would be acceptable. A multiplication of the historic uses with the addition of modern uses (restaurants, maintenance yards, employee housing, food trucks up to 90 new parking spaces, rvs and a new lodge) are not indicative of an "appropriate scale" of development.

Simply put, Sweetwater Lake is not the place to accommodate all the potential demand and all potential user groups.

The EIS should include the following analyses:

1. Address the impacts on adjacent wilderness areas. Adress the potential impacts on wildlife, the number of

users, maintenance of trails, increased fire potential, etc.

2. Consult with all tribal entities and detail cultural resources.

3. Analyze the hydrology of the lake and its surrounding wetlands, inflows and outflows and how climate change will affect the lake. Additionally, how will the water quality of the lake be protected with increased human activity and likely increased inflows. Consider the impacts on downstream users.

4. Conduct a detailed biological assessment of the properties and the impacts of any development. Analyze current wildlife resources in the area and how any proposed development will affect these resident populations. Also consider the impacts of increased traffic from I70 to the lake.

5. Include a traffic analysis which addresses current and future ADT and trip generation. Include input from Garfield and Eagle Counties on how their maintenance responsibilities will be affected. Address impacts on wildlife from increased traffic volumes.

6. Outdoor lighting should be restricted. What actions will be implemented to retain dark skies?

7. Water quality is of utmost concern. What measures will be taken to protect and improve surface water quality in the lake? How will wastewater treatment be addressed for campers, cabins, lodges, restaurants, employee housing, etc.?

8. Will existing water rights be affected?

9. Include a noise analysis. How will the area's quiet be preserved?

10. How will Fire protection and emergency services be addressed? Will Gypsum Fire protection provide those services?

Thanks for considering my comments.

Andrew McGregor