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First name: Bill

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: William B. Stephens

August 3 2024

United States Forest 900 Grand Avenue

Glenwood Springs, CO. 81601

Dear Heather Noel,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed development of a state park in collaboration with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) in Sweetwater Valley. The plan to increase daily occupancy from the historical 60 to a proposed 250 visitors raises several significant concerns that I urge you to consider carefully.

First and foremost, the environmental impact of such a development cannot be overstated. The fragile ecosystems within Sweetwater Valley are at risk of severe disruption due to the substantial increase in human activity. Increased foot traffic, vehicle emissions, and waste will lead to habitat destruction, wildlife displacement, and damage to the natural vegetation that defines our valley (U.S. Forest Service, Impacts of Recreation on Natural Resources, 2016; National Park Service, Visitor Impacts to Park Resources, 2020).

The proposed development will also lead to a dramatic increase in traffic through the 17-mile rural stretch of Sweetwater Valley. Our roads are not equipped to handle such a surge in vehicular activity, which will inevitably result in heightened wear and tear, congestion, and a greater likelihood of accidents. The noise and pollution generated by this influx will disturb the natural tranquility that both residents and wildlife currently enjoy (Federal Highway Administration, Traffic Congestion and Reliability, 2005; Environmental Protection Agency, Transportation and Air Quality, 2018).

Moreover, the impact on our local community cannot be ignored. The rural character of Sweetwater Valley is one of its most cherished attributes. Increasing daily visitor numbers to such an extent threatens to alter the community dynamics, potentially leading to higher property taxes, loss of privacy, and the degradation of our serene environment (American Planning Association, Impacts of Growth on Rural Communities, 2019).

Finally, the historical significance of Sweetwater Valley must be preserved. The area's historical usage and cultural heritage will be compromised by the proposed increase in occupancy and development (National Trust for Historic Preservation, The Importance of Preserving Historic Sites, 2017).

In light of these concerns, I urge the United States Forest Service to reconsider the proposed development and its potential impact on Sweetwater Valley. Our community values the natural beauty, peace, and historical significance of this area, and we believe that preserving these attributes is of utmost importance.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I hope that our concerns will be taken into account in your decision-making process.

Sincerely,

William B. Stephens

Mary K. Stephens

Katie LaFramboise

Ty LaFramboise

Malorie K. Stephens

Lucas B. Stephens

References

1. **U.S. Forest Service, 2016** - Impacts of Recreation on Natural Resources. Available at: [USFS](<https://www.fs.usda.gov>)
2. **National Park Service, 2020** - Visitor Impacts to Park Resources. Available at: [NPS](<https://www.nps.gov>)
3. **Federal Highway Administration, 2005** - Traffic Congestion and Reliability. Available at: [FHWA](<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov>)
4. **Environmental Protection Agency, 2018** - Transportation and Air Quality. Available at: [EPA](<https://www.epa.gov>)
5. **American Planning Association, 2019** - Impacts of Growth on Rural Communities. Available at:

[APA](<https://www.planning.org>)

6. **National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2017** - The Importance of Preserving Historic Sites. Available at:
[NTHP](<https://savingplaces.org>)

These references provide supporting evidence for the concerns outlined in the letter regarding the environmental impact, traffic congestion, community changes, resource management, and historical preservation.

William B Stephens

August 3, 2024

United States Forest Service 900 Grand Avenue

Glenwood Springs, CO. 81601

Dear Heather Noel,

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed development of Sweetwater Lake into a state park in partnership with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW). My primary concern lies with the potential negative impacts on local grazing permits and access for permit holders, alongside other significant issues.

The proposed development threatens to disrupt the longstanding use of the land for grazing, which is vital for local ranchers and the agricultural economy of Sweetwater Valley. Increasing visitor numbers and infrastructure development could limit the availability and quality of grazing land, making it difficult for permit holders to maintain their livestock and livelihoods. Studies have shown that increased human activity and land use changes can lead to soil erosion, loss of soil carbon stocks, and degradation of vegetation essential for grazing (Livestock Grazing on Public Lands, USDA Report, 2015; Costs and Consequences: The Real Price of Livestock Grazing on America's Public Lands, Center for Biological Diversity, 2015).

Moreover, increased traffic and human activity associated with the state park will likely interfere with the movement and health of grazing animals. Noise, pollution, and the presence of large numbers of visitors can stress livestock and potentially lead to lower productivity and higher management costs for ranchers.

The new infrastructure required to support a higher daily occupancy[mdash]such as roads, parking areas, and recreational facilities[mdash]could encroach upon and fragment grazing areas, further limiting the space available for livestock. The environmental degradation from increased human presence and activity also poses a risk to the vegetation and water resources essential for grazing. The environmental impact of grazing land intensification has been well-documented, showing that such changes reduce ecosystem diversity and productivity (Public Lands Grazing: Environmental Impacts, Sagebrush Sea Campaign, 2005).

Access routes used by permit holders for moving livestock and maintaining their operations could become congested or restricted due to the increased traffic and visitor use. This not only hampers daily operations but also poses safety risks for both livestock and people. The disruption to traditional grazing practices could have long-term negative effects on the local agricultural economy and the sustainability of the land (Trampling the Public Trust, Boston College Environmental Affairs Law Review, 2010).

In addition to these specific concerns about grazing, the broader implications of the development should be carefully considered. The environmental impact, traffic congestion, noise, and pollution associated with increasing the daily occupancy from 60 to 250 visitors will degrade the natural beauty and tranquility of Sweetwater Valley, affecting all who live and work here.

I strongly urge the United States Forest Service to reconsider the proposed development of Sweetwater Lake into a state park. The potential negative impacts on local grazing permits, environmental health, and community well-being are significant and should not be overlooked.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I trust that the concerns of the local community and the needs of those who depend on grazing permits will be given due consideration in your decision-making process.

Sincerely,

William B. Stephens

Mary K. Stephens

Katie LaFramboise

Ty LaFramboise

Malorie K. Stephens

Lucas B. Stephens

References

1. **USDA Report, 2015** - Livestock Grazing on Public Lands. Available at: [USDA Report](https://www.usda.gov)
2. **Center for Biological Diversity, 2015** - Costs and Consequences: The Real Price of Livestock Grazing on America's Public Lands. Available at: [Center for Biological Diversity](https://www.biologicaldiversity.org)
3. **Sagebrush Sea Campaign, 2005** - Public Lands Grazing: Environmental Impacts. Available at: [Sagebrush Sea Campaign](https://www.sagebrushsea.org)
4. **Boston College Environmental Affairs Law Review, 2010** - Trampling the Public Trust. Available at: [Boston College](https://lawdigitalcommons.bc.edu)

These references provide supporting evidence for the concerns outlined in the letter regarding the impacts on grazing permits, environmental health, and community well-being.