

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/6/2024 5:57:35 AM

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Title:

Comments: I am writing to express my concerns over some of the proposed plans for a state park in the Sweetwater Lake area. I live on Sweetwater Road, but I do not want my comments to be construed as a selfish attempt to keep the public away. Sweetwater Lake has always been a public use area, and it should continue to remain that way. By developing the area into a state park and changing its character, we destroy the history of the area and deprive current and future generations of the opportunity to experience a unique part of the state's history forever. The way this place has existed for generations is what makes it special, and we lose that if we develop it into something different.

I know many members of the community have spoken at length about many aspects of this plan, so I will only touch on topics of concern.

One of the biggest concerns is safety for the members of the community and for the guests who visit. With Sweetwater Road being a remote dead-end road, emergency response and evacuation are already quite challenging for something as terrifying as a wildfire. Adding more traffic, some of whom are not as familiar with the responsibilities of recreating in a primitive area, will increase the danger, especially the fire danger, for everyone.

As the road is barely one lane in places, has significant drop offs, and winds through 10 miles of a neighborhood, it cannot safely support more and larger traffic traveling at higher speeds. With the agricultural nature of the neighborhood, many folks use the road to move livestock and agricultural equipment, and increasing the traffic will increase the chances of catastrophic accidents. Add to this the risk of mud and landslides along Sweetwater Road, and increasing traffic seems like a great risk.

Also of great concern is the impact increased use will have on local wildlife, vegetation, and the local ecosystem down to the water which defines this valley. Impacting the natural systems which have existed in the area diminishes the experience for everyone and threatens the livelihood of the locals, both wild and domestic.

The outfitter and restaurant at the lake have long been an important part of the landscape in this area, and they should remain with whatever arrangement makes sense for the entities involved. Simply getting rid of them does not help preserve the character of the area.

As members of the public who use this land and are impacted by its use, we strongly urge you to reconsider plans for the Sweetwater Lake area and pursue a plan which will preserve the beauty and history of this place for everyone.