

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 8/3/2026 7:09:07 PM

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Comments: Dear Mr. Glaspell,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Sweetwater Lake Recreation Management and Development Project.

As I thought about the alternatives presented in the Draft EIS, I kept returning to one question: How can people continue to experience Sweetwater Lake without losing the qualities that make it worth experiencing in the first place?

As I read through the alternatives, I found myself thinking less about buildings or parking lots and more about something that is harder to define: how is the experience of Sweetwater Lake protected while making it available to more people?

My family has been part of this region for nearly sixty years. Some of my earliest memories include attending Anderson Camp when I was young. Although Anderson Camp is now gone, those experiences helped shape my appreciation for this landscape. Over the decades, I have watched Colorado grow as more people discovered its beauty. The reason many of us choose to live here-and why visitors continue to come-is because places like Sweetwater Lake still exist.

I appreciate the amount of work that has gone into this Draft EIS. It is clear that the Forest Service has carefully considered public access, natural resource protection, public safety, historic preservation, and the long-term stewardship of this property. I especially appreciate that the Proposed Action includes a visitor limit, an Environmentally Sensitive Area Zone, seasonal wildlife protections, and an adaptive Visitor Use Management Plan. Those elements reflect a genuine effort to balance recreation with stewardship.

My remaining concerns are less about any single proposal than about the cumulative effect of many small changes over time.

Individually, many of the proposed improvements make sense. My concern is that their combined effect may be greater than the sum of their parts. Visitors experience Sweetwater Lake as a whole, not as individual projects or management zones.

The Draft EIS acknowledges that increased visitation will change the visitor experience and that some visitors seeking greater solitude may choose other places as use increases. That observation resonated with me because quiet, dark skies, wildlife, natural sounds, and a sense of discovery are not simply amenities at Sweetwater Lake-they are what define the place.

One question I was left with was how the proposed limit of 250 visitors was determined. Does that number represent the level of use that best protects both the visitor experience and the natural resources, or is it based primarily on the capacity of the proposed facilities? Understanding how that threshold was established would help explain how the balance between access and preservation was reached.

I also appreciated the adaptive approach described in the Visitor Use Management Plan. At the

same time, I found myself wondering how the Forest Service and Colorado Parks and Wildlife will evaluate something that is much harder to measure: whether Sweetwater Lake still feels like Sweetwater Lake. Parking, trail conditions, shoreline impacts, and vegetation can all be monitored. The quieter qualities that define the experience-solitude, natural soundscapes, and the feeling of being somewhere relatively undeveloped-are more difficult to measure, but they are equally important.

The access road deserves mention because, for many people, it is part of the experience. The long, winding dirt road signals that you are leaving a busier world behind. I recognize that the transportation analysis necessarily focuses on safety, traffic, and operations. At the same time, I wonder how increased use by larger RVs, horse trailers, and recreational trailers could gradually change that experience-not only through increased traffic, but through the cumulative pressure for additional road improvements over time.

The discussion of the existing buildings was one of the most interesting parts of the Draft EIS. I understand why many cannot simply be reopened given the structural and safety issues that have been identified. At the same time, they represent an important part of Sweetwater Lake's history. As plans move forward, I would welcome a little more discussion about how that history-including the lodge, the longtime restaurant, the outfitter, and the stories associated with them-will continue to be part of Sweetwater's identity.

Overall, I came away from the Draft EIS with an appreciation for the care that has gone into this planning process. It is clear that the Forest Service has worked hard to balance recreation, stewardship, and preservation, and I appreciate the complexity of that responsibility.

When my family first came to this region nearly sixty years ago, places like Sweetwater Lake were part of what made it feel special. Even today, I believe that's still true. People are drawn here because landscapes like this still exist.

My hope is that, as this project moves forward, success is measured not only by how many people are able to visit Sweetwater Lake, but also by whether the qualities that have made it so special are still there for future generations to experience.

For me, those qualities are the quiet, the dark skies, the wildlife, the winding dirt road, the history, and the feeling that you have arrived somewhere different. I hope that twenty years from now, someone visiting Sweetwater Lake for the first time will leave with that same feeling-that they discovered somewhere quiet, authentic, and worth protecting.

Thank you for considering my comments and for the thought and care that have gone into this important decision.

Respectfully,
Leslie Dietz