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Comments: Sweetwater Lk DEIS Comments September 22, 2026

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*We are very concerned citizens who feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of the DEIS and what appears as a total lack of attention by the USFS to the many hundreds of "scoping comments" sent in. It definitely feels that those many, many comments were given short shrift in order to go with what comes across as a preordained Alternative.

*The DEIS preferred Alternative is not much different than the original development proposal drawn up by Rich Doak long before Scoping started. This makes the chosen alternative appear to be a preconceived choice while ignoring the scoping comments and concerns. Would like to see Doak's original development proposal for Sweetwater Lake "Park" alongside Alternative 4 - transparency would be appreciated.

*Evacuation Plan for fires, floods, rockslides, mud flows, traffic accidents or other natural/manmade disasters should have been developed for each alternative. Given recent road closures caused by mudflows, rocks and flooding along Sweetwater Road and the Colorado River Road in the last 3-4 weeks it would seem this would be imperative. If the enhanced Sweetwater Lake "Park" is developed anything short of adequate evacuation plans, alternate routes & emergency response times would only put the public in danger.

*Sweetwater Lake is far removed from any emergency services with long response times. Increased people use at the lake will increase the need for first responders. There is limited cell phone coverage and land line service is often interrupted. What is the long-term plan for addressing these issues? Is the safety of the local residents and visitors left up to the individuals or the local county emergency services?

*If not called a "state park" what are the alternatives? Is there a preferred Alternative to comment on?

*What if the proposed cooperative management plan falls through with CPW? How will the area be operated? Some state parks officials say they do not believe a cooperative management agreement will ever come to fruition. Forest Service has already said they have no money or manpower to manage the property. State park officials state they have the same constraints. Is there a plan for worst case scenario? Would the chosen alternative change if CPW doesn't take over the management of the lake? Scott Fitzwilliams previously stated that if the Forest Service had the management and maintenance then it would be Alternative 1, no action.

*Maintain the area north of the main road as critical wildlife habitat and preclude any development or activities that would negatively impact that area including hiking/biking trails, cross country ski trails, etc. Raptor nests should be given full protection from late January to July 10.

*Any wildlife impacts should be fully mitigated (defined as No Net Loss) and current Standards and Guidelines should not be changed or adjusted to minimize impacts. No ethical wildlife biologist would endorse the proposed changes of wildlife standards in order to downplay and/or avoid addressing actual wildlife impacts. Actual, Best Management Practices should be employed when dealing with wildlife.

*One of the main objectives/goals in the public acquiring Sweetwater Lake was to protect the lake for the public and "...protect critical habitat for bald eagles, osprey, elk, deer and other wildlife...". Alternatives 2 & 4 don't allow for this objective to be met.

*I believe the capacity figure for the Sweetwater Lake site would best suited at 100 per day. (I used the figures for total number of vehicles: 20 using campground, 8 using day use and boat launch, 10 using the 10 cabins, 5 using

café, 7 using horse area. This totals out at 50 vehicles; and 2 people/vehicle = 100, (a conservative figure) Including workers/employees or their vehicles, the actual number would be closer to 108-110. The proposed capacity figures given in the Alternatives 2-4 is ludicrous.

*The campground should emphasize primitive camping for tents, vans and small popup style camper units. Campground should not have cement pads, no electrical hookups, no flush toilets or showers. A water system would also be a luxury item and is really not needed. Few forest campgrounds provide water on the White River National Forest (i.e. Yeoman Park, Deep Creek, Fulford Cave, etc.). Water and electricity should not be considered needed for a remote site as this.

*Use the campground expansion plan that USFS employee Eric Martin drew up many years ago. This would increase the existing campground approximately 2.5 times and keep the campground south of the road. Limit vehicle lengths (including camping trailers) to no more than 28-30'. This is a common restriction in many National Parks and would help keep the area, and roads free of overly large RVs.

*Campground should be located close to the lake, otherwise campers will use the motor vehicles to travel back and forth from the lake to campsites increasing congestion, traffic, noise and need for additional parking. A fishing pier should be replaced at the current campground where the old one was located.

*Proposed campground in Alternatives 2-4 would be located too far from the lake campers are there to enjoy. Pedestrian access on the northern shoreline of Sweetwater Lake is very limited in order to get to the water's edge.

*Horse trailers should be limited in number, 7-9, and not greater than 30' in length (not counting the motor vehicle). These should be confined to the equestrian area.

*The cabins should not have electricity, cooking facilities or running water (dry cabins). Solar lights would be OK. These cabins should be like the small cabins at Sylvan Lake or the yurts on East Brush Creek, keeping the area a low impact, fairly primitive camping experience.

*Allow for a restaurant/cafe to be constructed and operated a permittee or concessionaire. Prior to the Forest Service acquiring this site, the restaurant was a community social hub for many decades while supplying tourists with quality food in a historic setting. Current plans call for a "vending machine" type operation that would not be adequate to serve the local community, tourists and overnight campers. A small restaurant/café could help make the management of the site profitable for the permittee and improve opportunity for an economical viable operation.

*Given Adrian Brink's history with the operation of the lakes lodging, recreation, horse activities and restaurant, a long-term lease (>20yrs) should be offered so she can afford to invest her time, money and energy into bringing the place alive again. The lease terms must allow financial investors to be comfortable in financing needed improvements and still allow the lessee to profit from running the operation. The Forest Service does indeed allow restaurants to operate under special use permits or lease agreement (Trappers Lake and Tiger Run). A restaurant/café at Sweetwater be appropriate.

*The History of the Sweetwater Lake and the surrounding area has only been given a cursory mention. This area has been occupied by some of the earliest residents of Eagle and Garfield counties, who set up residences and commercial enterprises. History should be preserved, not glossed over to allow the destruction of some of the cabins and to create an easier approach to the area's redevelopment for the government.

*New building construction, other than the small cabins, seems to be excessive. Sylvan Lake State Park only has 4 FTEs and a small number of seasonals. The number of residential buildings to be constructed seems way out of line. Why so many? Who will reside there? Is the Forest trying to solve their employee housing shortage at Sweetwater Lake?

For the last 5+ years the USFS has heard concerns from the local communities and governments regarding future management of the lake. Those concerns were: keep it public but low key, don't increase traffic volumes, allow for a restaurant, and most of all don't allow the overdevelopment of the lake and surrounding land. Has USFS really listened? Alternatives 2-4 certainly do not reflect those concerns. I encourage the Forest Service decision makers to once again review the hundreds of comments received in the Scoping portion of this NEPA process.