

TOD B. LINSTROTH

Edwards, CO 81632

August 14, 2026

White River National Forest
c/o Brian Glaspell
Attn: Sweetwater Lake Recreation Management and Development Project
900 Grand Avenue
Glenwood Springs, CO 81601

Re: Comments on Sweetwater Lake Recreation Management and Development Project and Plan Amendment EIS

Dear Mr. Glaspell,

I am writing with my comments to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared by the USDA Forest Service for the Sweetwater Lake Recreation Management and Development Project Plan (the "Plan") as summarized in the report to "Interested Stakeholders" by you. At the outset I would like to emphatically note that the risk to permanently damage or impair Sweetwater Lake and the surrounding areas is much too great with any significant infrastructure or overuse.

Sweetwater Lake is pristine and dramatic in appearance, and it provides an experience being in an untouched wilderness area alone. The collaborating parties which joined together to acquire the Sweetwater Lake property for the public benefit are to be applauded. However, to proceed with Alternatives 2 or 4 of the Plan as presented risks losing the benefit of its natural beauty by creating just another unneeded tourist attraction.

The area as it exists provides space for parking with access for hiking, camping, horseback riding, hunting and fishing on the lake and into the Flattops Mountain Wilderness Area. Until the recent closures, the scale of lodging and dining facilities was in such a small scale that supported and enhanced the wilderness experience. The risk of developing Sweetwater Lake as summarized in Alternatives 2 and 4 of the Plan is to damage and change forever, one of the most beautiful and pristine areas in Colorado.

I speak from experience. I first visited Sweetwater Lake twenty or more years ago. I have taken horseback trail rides, have brought my horses to ride in and camp in the Flattops, have been on outfitter overnights in the Flattops and have stayed at Sweetwater Lake Resort. The description of Sweetwater Lake Resort cabins as "rustic" is a somewhat understatement but is exactly what belongs.

I have canoed and fly fished on the Lake, alone or with just one or two other parties fishing on what is a relatively small but incredibly beautiful lake. For all the times I have been there over the years the number of visitors and campers has been small, enough so that the exquisite feeling of solitude and natural beauty has been preserved for all with the energy and sense of adventure to explore its natural beauty.

I favor Alternative 1, if Alternative 1 is to preserve Sweetwater "as is" but could support Alternative 3 if the "more pristine" is emphasized and the size, and scale of development is geared toward small number of users.

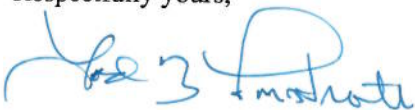
I moved to Colorado in retirement more than ten years ago, and camped, canoed, and fished throughout my home state, Wisconsin. Wisconsin is a state of beautiful lakes, rivers, and forests. In contrast to Colorado with all of its public lands, Wisconsin has a relatively small allocation of public land when compared to Colorado. Wisconsin's natural resources not only serve the state with two large metropolitan areas, it is within easy driving distance of Chicago and Minneapolis. In the balancing of public need and natural beauty, Wisconsin has had little choice but to make its campgrounds, even in the most remote areas, large enough to accommodate public demand. An example of public accommodation taken to an extreme is Devils Lake State Park near Baraboo, Wisconsin. Devils Lake is a beautiful glacier created natural and deep lake with towering quartzite bluffs surrounding the lake. However, the natural beauty of Devils Lake is hidden by the busy metropolis feeling of four different campgrounds, numerous picnic areas, and administrative buildings and support which accommodate heavy public use. Devils Lake State Park is not a wilderness experience but rather a tourist attraction with crowds and traffic jams. Over development and use of Sweetwater Lake risks converting this pristine and beautiful wilderness experience into a Devils Lake tourist attraction.

I realize the Plan does not include the density of use of Devils Lake, but the comparison still applies. Once changed to accommodate higher densities, the existing experience of pristine wilderness with some degree of solitude is lost forever. I am sure Devils Lake started more modestly than the urbanized feel of the campgrounds and picnic areas that exist today.

There are few, if any, remote areas that can provide the experience one obtains in one visit to Sweetwater Lake without a rigorous hike into the back country. The objective of the Plan should be to preserve to the greatest extent possible, the true splendid nature of Sweetwater Lake as it exists today. An online search indicates that there are more than 13,000 developed campsites on public and private lands in Colorado, so the number of campsites added under Alternatives 2 and 4 would be a very small addition to the total but would come at a great cost.

If overdeveloped, there will be no possibility to turn back the clock, and no way to restore this beautiful area back to the way it exists today. Please do not make a mistake with the possibility of irreparable harm to Sweetwater Lake.

Respectfully yours,



Tod B. Linstroth