

Open Letter Regarding Sweetwater Lake Wildlife Protections

September 20, 2026

Jessica Foulis, Executive Director
Bergen Tjossem, Deputy Director
Members of the Executive Committee, Eagle Valley Land Trust

Dear Jessica, Bergen, and Members of the Executive Committee:

I am writing as a Save the Lake donor with one specific request about EVLT's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) comment. I ask that EVLT request that the Forest Service include CPW's own High-priority raptor and ungulate protections as enforceable terms of the Record of Decision and any Special Use Permit. This is the only request I make. I am not asking EVLT to change its support for a state park, compatible recreation, or any other part of its comment.

EVLT's Save the Lake materials asked the public to help protect Sweetwater Lake. One flyer stated that protecting the lake means *"conserving critical habitat for elk, deer, osprey, bald eagles, and other wildlife."* A companion flyer described habitat protection as permanent conservation of habitat for Bald Eagles, osprey, elk, deer, and other wildlife. Those representations were an important reason for my donation.

CPW's 2024 Sweetwater Lake Property Resource Stewardship Plan identifies as High priority both seasonal raptor protections and seasonal protection for sensitive elk and mule deer habitat. For raptors, the Plan calls for use of CPW's 2020 raptor-buffer guidance, seasonal lake-access restrictions, and closure of specified trails. It states that Bald Eagles and Peregrine Falcons were actively nesting in the relevant area when the Plan was drafted. For elk and mule deer, it calls for a December 1 to June 15 closure, or measures developed with the District Wildlife Manager, if facilities or trails are located nearby. CPW's recommendations are fully aligned with EVLT's Save the Lake campaign messaging.

I am simply asking EVLT to seek an enforceable commitment to those CPW recommendations in the project decision. Nothing in this request assumes that CPW does not intend to apply them. The point is to state the protections in the federal decision documents so that the measures governing construction and operations are clear to the agencies, EVLT, and the public.

EVLT could make that request in a short paragraph such as:

"EVLT supports the establishment of a state park and compatible public recreation at Sweetwater Lake. To ensure long-term operational clarity and uphold the core conservation values shared by our donors, EVLT requests that the Forest Service explicitly include CPW's own 2024 Resource Stewardship Plan High-priority guidelines—specifically regarding standard seasonal raptor buffers and sensitive elk/deer habitat protections—as clear, enforceable management terms within the final Record of Decision and Special Use Permit."

Please confirm by 5:00 p.m. MDT on September 22, 2026 whether EVLT will make this one request in its DEIS comment. A brief confirmation is sufficient. I would appreciate a copy or link once EVLT's comment is filed.

Because this is an open letter, I will post it and the attached source excerpts on www.savesweetwaterlake.org. I will promptly add a link to EVLT's filed comment or any substantive response, with personal contact information removed.

Respectfully,

Ken Wright
Save the Lake donor