Bighorn Lake Draft Operating Criteria Comments

Attention: Ms. Paula A. Holwegner

Respectfully Submitted by Kip Dean, Professional Fishing Guide with Bighorn Trout Shop and member of Bighorn River Alliance, my phone number is (406)623-5172, e-mail kipdean@hotmail.com

Comments:

Please manage river flows to eliminate the sub-minimal long term flow, draft the reservoir sufficiently to easily manage the spring runoff and thus avoiding the damaging and dangerously high flows that we've experienced in recent years.

I make my living on the Bighorn River, I live in Ft. Smith, and have guided for the Trout Shop since 1990. My income has been adversely affected by lack of business during the long periods of high flows. Also, I have experience loss of business due to poor water quality for fishing in the fall, due to the higher than normal water temperatures and the algae bloom from the Afterbay Dam.

There are many downsides of higher lake elevations that I am sure the Army Corps of Engineers can attest to.

When lowering the river after a period of high water, to eliminate excessive river bank erosion, please lower the river incrementally and not as quickly as has been done lately.

It has been shown that high flows on the river (not exceeding 8,000cfs) do the river and the fishery good. The period of time that the river is high (above 8,000cfs) has been too long (exceeding 4-6 weeks) and this could have been managed by a quicker response to the facts of high snow pack conditions and letting water out ahead of the high water surge from the snow melt.

I am aware of how hard it is to manage all of the human interests for the Yellowtail Reservoir water system and the water shed as well as trying to come up with a long term plan that takes what nature gives and adjusting it to suit our needs. The Rule Curve needs to be broadened to allow more real time adjustments that are influenced by environmental changes (water events, high snow pack, etc.) In other words, allow the Rule Curve some leeway in adjusting to changing water conditions.

Sincerely,

Kip Dean