From: Larry Timchak [mailto:ltimchak@yahoo.com]
Sent: Saturday, January 29, 2011 5:19 PM
To: Duberstein, Leonard (Lenny) B
Subject: Comments on Yellowtail Dam Operation Plan

Dear Lenny,

I apologize in advance for being a day late with my comments- I hope the Bureau can include them in your analysis.

I have enjoyed the Bighorn River below Yellowtail Dam for many years. It is one of the finest and most productive tailwater trout fisheries in the world, as evidenced by the tens of thousands of fisherman who travel wide and far to enjoy the tremendous fisheries.

As you consider the appropriate in stream flow levels for the river, please keep in mind that the optimal flow from a fisheries perspective is 3,500 cfs, not the 2,500 that the Bureau claims. Rather, 2500 cfs should be the minimal flow during low water years. Please conider drawing down the reservoir lower in the spring than called for in the draft criteria – to an elevation of about 3,614 feet in April -- thereby reducing the need to rapidly lower the reservoir should spring runoff become a problem. This will secure more water for hydro protection and reduce flooding risk to public campgrounds and marinas on the north side of the reservoir, as well as to Montana landowners along the river. It will also better secure the fishery and fishing in the Bighorn River.

I understand the complex balancing act the Bureau attempts to achieve between reservoir levels and downstream river flow. In this case, given the incredible values of the Bighorn River including an estimated economic impact exceeding $50 million per year, flows for the river are much more important than maintaining high reservoir levels for very limited recreation use and benefit.

Thank you for considering my comments.

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