From: Jim Benepe [mailto:jbenepe111@gmail.com]
Sent: Friday, January 21, 2011 11:43 AM
To: Duberstein, Leonard (Lenny) B
Subject: Big Horn Lake and BH River comment

Hello Lenny,
I would like to submit the following comments regarding the Big Horn Lake and River.

I believe you can better balance the reservoir pool with healthy flows in the Bighorn, an objective that helps protect the river fishery, which generates an estimated $50 million a year to Montana's economy. I live in Sheridan, WY and have been frequenting the river below the dam for fly fishing days for the past 25 years. I have seen the river in the drought years with fish dying off rapidly and in high water years when the flow was so high fishing was impossible.
I would like you to acknowledge that 3,500 cfs is the optimum flows for a healthy fishery, and that 2,500 cfs is a minimum target to shoot for only during drought years when the higher objective is unobtainable.
I propose you draw 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 evacuate the reservoir should spring storms 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've read about the battle for upper lake campgrounds and I believe a balance can be struck w/out destroying one of the best trout fisheries in North America. I venture that there are more people who fish the river below the dam and provide more economic benefit year round than those who might go camping only in the summer months.
Please accept my comments.
Jim Benepe
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