To:

Mr. Lenny Duberstein
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USA

From:

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Bighorn Lake Operating Criteria (Draft)

Dear Lenny,

Please allow me to introduce myself, my name is Alfred Oertli. Growing up on beautiful Lake Zurich in Switzerland, I'm well aware of all the technical and recreational benefits of such a clean and well managed resource which I'm fortunate to enjoy still today.

As a PhD Chemist and Business Manager I have been stationed and have worked for renowned Universities and Chemical Companies in America, Asia-Pacific and Europe. Today I'm based back home in Switzerland.

As an International Traveler, all through my professional career between 1993 and 2010, I had the great pleasure to visit the beautiful Bighorn Valley and the fabled Bighorn River to enjoy the fishing, scenery, and relaxation found.

This means I have been traveling to the Bighorn River twenty (20) times, and I have fished the river well over 180 days, through all seasons, February through December. I'm tempted to say, that I know this river well.

My fishing adventures to the Bighorn River accounted for 65'000 Dollars in guided trips, 20'000 Dollars in Lodging, 6'000 Dollars in Food and about 30'000 Dollars of equipment, garments, accessories and gadgets, totaling at a local turnover in Wyoming and Montana well over *120'000 Dollars*.
This does not include international and domestic air travel which would account for an additional 60'000 Dollars spent.

I am not a rich man and money of that magnitude does not come easy nor is it spent without consideration. It is the beauty of the valley, the generosity of the local people and of course the spectacular fishing on the Big Horn River that force me to come back. Having fished in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Canada to mention just a few countries, none of my greatest travels elsewhere come even close to what one can experience on the Bighorn.

I treasure this for all my life and I trust that your organization will do its outmost to preserve this unique jewel.

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I have read the draft proposal of the Bighorn Lake Operation Criteria carefully and do acknowledge the great effort made by you and your organization to understand the Bighorn Lake inflow regimes and to come up with a new management plan to address the needs of energy production, flood control, lake recreational needs, river trout habitat and river fishing. I trust you are considering all needs very carefully.

The new criteria calls for lake levels at least 8 feet higher than in years past, and sets a minimum target lake elevation just 22 feet below the top of the conservation pool which is 13 feet higher than average.

I cannot help mentioning that the proposed operating criteria appears to me as *leaving very little flexibility* for addressing errors or the, admittedly hard to predict, acts of nature such as the rather extreme inflows we have experienced in 2009 and most prominently 2010.

It appears that we will be looking at regular low flows throughout fall, winter and early spring and extreme high flows during the late spring and early summer.

Lenny, I have walked, floated and fished the entire river during both the drought years with very low river flows as well as during years with extreme high river flows. Neither of these damaging situations is necessary or acceptable.

We all know what the result was for fish populations due to the siltation, consequent loss of bio-mass and spawning habitat during consecutive low water years.
At the same time we have just observed the impact of dangerous and damaging high water which not only goes wasted for clean energy production but erodes stream banks, and puts a variety of businesses at risks as the rivers becomes literally unfishable for up to 2 months at the time.

As much as I believe your plans *are* going in the right direction I urge you to review the underlying assumptions and take into consideration the impact of your plans to the Bighorn River on both extreme ends of the spectrum, i.e. extremely low and extremely high flows. As much as both may happen again in the future, I believe both situations should not be part of a normal operations plan and a somehow bigger window of operation matched up with close observation and speedy response times might well be an acceptable solution to that.

Thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Alfred G. Oertli