Original Message-----
From: Dave Grainger [mailto:dwgrainger@gmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, January 02, 2011 11:45 AM
To: Duberstein, Leonard (Lenny) B
Subject: Reclamation's Big Horn Basin Water Management plan comments

Mr. Duberstein:

I write to you as a voter, avid fly fisherman, riverman, boater, waterskier, outdoorsman and middle-ground conversationist, regarding the Big Horn basin. While I recognize multiple perspectives involved in the Big Horn River management planning process, and the multiple agendas, both political and economic, involved, I do NOT believe -- based on my own experiences with the Big Horn Lake, the Big Horn River and my balanced portfolio of decades of water recreation experiences -- that your agency has put forth proper recommendations in your DRAFT report: BR's Big Horn Lake Operating Criteria Evaluation Study and Report, 2010 (http://bighornriver.org/uploads/operating_criteria_evaluation.pdf).

The focus of your agency's DRAFT report on preserving excessive lake levels "required" for lake recreation and power generation is a thinly veiled political maneuver cow-towing to Wyoming and Montana powerboater interests, hydro-power production plus a few high-powered politicos with an occasional interest in ensuring their boating and waterskiing access in the upper lake year-round. This myopia was readily recognized in recent years through repeated informal census of upper lake users in both drought (e.g., 2007) and higher lake level (e.g., 1999, 2009) conditions, and identifies how this current lake level policy as formulated in the DRAFT is a "tyranny of the minority" of all stakeholders in this basin. The lack of equal attention paid to below-dam tail-water river stream flows, river flow maintenance beyond irrigation supply and flood control, improved balancing of extreme annual flow fluctuations, attention to the river as a unique, fragile and diverse ecosystem with its wildlife and fishery, and the increasing economic vitality and draw of the river as a fisherman's economy is in fact deplorable. Specifically, the 1500 CFS target as a minimal stream flow in the tail-water River section is insufficient for sustained trout fishery health as almost any fisheries expert and experienced River guide will tell you. Fisheries data from 3 decades ago when the River ecosystem was quite different is dangerously relied upon for current DRAFT fisheries guidance. Very recent empirical evidence (in the apparent absence of more scientific studies) for fishery impact of low River stream flows (2006-2008) could tell your agency a lot more about Big Horn low stream flow impacts to both species of trout managed there, as well as many other wildlife species in the Big Horn River basin. Extreme river flow fluctuations as recently witnessed could also provide evidence for emerging issues as well.

In this 21st Century, with our nation's vast communication, climate, hydrology and environmental resources, I cannot imagine that your agency cannot better engage other agencies, the various pro-Lake constituencies in Wyoming and Montana, as well as all downstream River interests, including those involved with fisheries and wildlife protection, agriculture, and the Crow Agency, to better articulate and execute a Big Horn plan that

guarantees the Big Horn River below Yellowtail Dam a increased minimum "healthy" stream flow year-round, and also can avoid the excessive releases and purges and high-low fluctuations that characterize current stream flow controls. Additionally, there is an immense amount of practical user-based knowledge, built on almost 4 decades of experience of daily monitoring of the Big Horn River flows and wildlife activity below Yellowtail Dam, embedded in those who make their daily livelihoods and recreation interests on the tail-water river section, that could be better tapped in understanding how Lake management affects River management in the Big Horn/Wind River drainage daily and annually. A lot of this local wisdom is absent in the current document.

I personally am interested in and will advocate my will through whatever powers I can access to ensure that both future generations and my own can enjoy a wonderful and unique Big Horn River fishing and recreation resource without upstream interests tyrannically serving their own commercial and recreation interests at the expense of the river ecological health. The risk of losing the blue ribbon fishery and its associated economic activity is too great. I do not enjoy watching Big Horn river fisheries interests be held hostage to Lake recreation minority stakeholders, and irrigation interests downstream. In the absence of a broadly balanced River focus, this is not part of a rational comprehensive management strategy. The DRAFT has "special interests" written in between the lines that are unfairly balanced.

I look forward to your agency's better weighting of all stakeholders' interests in maintaining Big Horn river health and longevity through a better balanced approach to the River as a goal, vis-à-vis balanced Lake and dam controls. This would best be embodied in a revised DRAFT policy for the Big Horn Lake/River system that better considers the tail-water through the increasing economic prosperity and growing impact that its trout fishing brings.

I thank you in advance for your efforts on behalf of me and many of my like-minded Big Horn River enthusiasts. I look forward to seeing DRAFT revisions.

Sincerely,

Dave Grainger