From: Bonnie Edwards [mailto:bonnieedwards@rap.midco.net]
Sent: Saturday, January 22, 2011 7:13 AM
To: Duberstein, Leonard (Lenny) B
Subject: Water flows to Bighorn River Fishery

Dear Mr. Duberstein,

The Bighorn River tailwater fishery, downstream of Yellowtail Dam, is a very important revenue source for the State of Montana, resulting in fishers coming from all of the surrounding states. I respectfully request that the Bureau of Reclamation modify the current draft plan to better protect this world-class and high revenue-generating fishery (up to $50 million).

I understand the desire to fill Bighorn Lake to provide recreation for summer users of the southern portion. However, this increases the risk of evacuating water rapidly from behind the dam in the event of heavy spring storms, such as happened in 1009 and 2010, resulting in flooding downstream at detriment to the fishery. Whereas Bighorn Lake has limited use, primarily during the major summer months, the Bighorn River attracts hardy souls for a much longer period during the year.

According to the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks research, target flows in the Bighorn should be 3500 cfs, with 2500 cfs as the minimum during drought years. I would respectfully suggest that the reservoir level be lower in the spring than called for in your draft (around 3500 or so feet in April) to avoid rapid release of water should spring storms become a problem, thus reducing harm to the campgrounds and marina on the north side of the reservoir as well as Montana landowners and the Bighorn River fishery.

Thank you.

Bonnie and Jack Edwards, Rapid City, SD