

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

## Yellowtail Dam & Bighorn Lake Operating Criteria

Lovell, Wyoming  
April 14, 2016

# Background

- **Nov 2014 - Jan 2015: Criteria opened up for comment**
- **Criteria Documents:**
  - *“Final Draft Yellowtail Unit Operating Criteria Evaluation Study & Report”*
  - *“Draft Bighorn Lake Operating Criteria (Changes for the 2012 Water Year)”*
  - [http://www.usbr.gov/gp/mtao/yellowtail/bighorn\\_longterm.html](http://www.usbr.gov/gp/mtao/yellowtail/bighorn_longterm.html)

# Remaining Evaluations

- **End of October Lake Elevation**
  - Provide End of October Target of 3630 to 3640
- **Manage for River Stage**
  - Manage river levels based on stage instead of flow during the summer months
  - Still maintains rearing habitat
  - Stores water for higher winter releases
- **End of March Lake Elevation**
  - Use more storage for higher winter river releases
  - Lower risks for evacuating storage in spring

# Work since November 2015

- **End of March Elevation**
  - Best to operate in the middle range between high and low runoff based on operational studies
- **November through March Gains**
  - Add and confirm evaluation already completed
- **April through July Runoff Forecast**
  - Increase in forecast error
- **Rule Curves**
  - Include latest years of runoff data and adjust curves

# Next Steps

- **Complete Remaining Evaluations**
  - Present status and recommendations at fall meeting
- **Wrap-up effort with a report responding to all comments**
  - Anticipate “Interim” posting of actions completed
- **Create a condensed operating criteria document**
- [http://www.usbr.gov/gp/mtao/yellowtail/bighorn\\_longterm.html](http://www.usbr.gov/gp/mtao/yellowtail/bighorn_longterm.html)