

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS
LT. GOVERNOR

July 6, 2023

The Honorable Tommy Beaudreau
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Mr. Beaudreau,

As you are aware, waters levels in Montana's Flathead Lake are dropping quickly and are expected to continue dropping in the coming days and weeks as temperatures rise. These low water levels present a significant threat to the economic vitality of the region. In our phone call last week, you raised releases of water from the Bureau of Reclamation's Hungry Horse Project, located upstream of Flathead Lake, as a potential solution.

I understand that the operations of the Hungry Horse Project have wide-ranging impacts to the region, are governed by a complex set of rules and regulations, and that tribes, federal agencies, and other entities such as the Bonneville Power Administration would be affected by this course of action. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission hydropower regulations, applicable biological opinions, and regional power supply concerns all must be considered when deciding a course of action, voices must be heard, and widespread consensus must be built.

Therefore, before your Department acts, I request you directly consult with the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other impacted federal agencies to review the scope of its authority to release water from the Hungry Horse Project to help mitigate the impacts of low water levels on the people and economy of the Flathead Valley.

In particular, I request that the Bureau of Reclamation provide an analysis to the State of Montana regarding how much water could be available from the Hungry Horse Project, what impact that water will have on water levels in Flathead Lake, and the projected timelines associated with possible releases. Given the urgency of this situation, we request this information be provided to my office no later than Tuesday, July 11. Please direct the information and any questions to Michael Freeman, natural resources policy advisor, at Michael.Freeman@mt.gov.

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If the Department of the Interior can identify a solution that would meet the requirements of federal law and regulation, the State of Montana stands ready to assist you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Greg Gianforte".

Greg Gianforte
Governor

CC: Martha Williams
Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Camille Touton
Commissioner
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation