

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 20, 2023

Camille Calimlim Touton
Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1849 C St NW # 7654
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Commissioner Touton,

I write today to express my concern about the recent decision by the Columbia River Technical Management Team, who advises your agency, to reject Governor Gianforte's request to release more water from the Hungry Horse Reservoir.

This release is necessary to help stabilize the water levels of Flathead Lake, which are currently at historic lows, significantly affecting the economic stability of the small businesses surrounding the lake. Not only are the small businesses that rely on the lake's tourism affected but also the farmers in Flathead County. Farmers from Kalispell rely on water from the Flathead River to continuously fill a slough that is used to irrigate their crops. Due to the low water levels in the river, the slough has reached a diversion point and can no longer intake water. It is clear that the decision regarding Hungry Horse has impacts that ripple through the state.

I request that your organization reconsider this decision. Simply put, we must value our citizens' livelihoods over potential harm to the fish in the reservoir. This action is not novel, as your agency made a similar move in 2001 when Flathead's water level dropped. The economic consequences of this low water level will be far-reaching, resulting in millions of dollars of infrastructure damage to docks and piers and the potential for boating accidents and injuries due to the low water levels. Furthermore, farmers are worried that they may lose hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of crops as the slough begins to run dry. We must do everything we can to mitigate the effects and ensure that the local economies can stay afloat during this period of excess heat.

Protecting the Montanans and their way of life is the most critical issue for myself and my colleagues in Congress, and this decision to decline the Governor's request threatens many constituents throughout the state and not just in western Montana as the economic distress will have significant spreading effects throughout the state. Thank you for considering my request; I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,



Matthew M. Rosendale, Sr.
Member of Congress