

United States Senate

July 6, 2023

The Honorable M. Camille Calimlim Touton
Commissioner
Bureau of Reclamation
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Commissioner Touton:

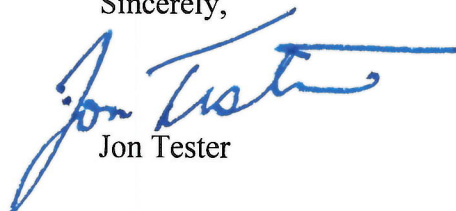
I write today with serious concerns about the low water levels on Flathead Lake. Flathead Lake's water levels continue to rapidly decline with reports suggesting that the lake could dip to as much as 22 inches below pool levels in the coming days. This lack of water is a direct threat to public safety, small businesses and local farmers. I appreciate our conversation earlier today and the ongoing conversations our offices have had over the past week.

I am pleased the Bureau of Reclamation is standing by to swiftly act on recommendations from the State of Montana and the Technical Management Team (TMT) on potential mitigation options for water levels on Flathead Lake. It is my hope that you will receive a recommended course of action from the state government and TMT soon. When you do, I ask that you prioritize getting them a response and taking actions on workable solutions for impacted Montanans.

I am hearing directly from Montanans in the region that the low water levels are threatening the livelihood of Montana small businesses. These businesses range from farmers who need to irrigate a crop, marina owners who may not be able to keep boats in the water, and hospitality leaders who serve the thousands of visitors that flock to Flathead Lake each summer. These agriculture and outdoor recreation jobs are the backbone of Montana's economy, which is why it is critically important to act when the State of Montana and the TMT determine a preferred course of action.

I encourage you and your office to continue to reach out to impacted stakeholders and relevant agencies to ensure everyone has the information they need as options to address this issue are reviewed. I also ask that you continue to stay in close contact with the communities surrounding Flathead Lake to assess any changing conditions and to provide any information required for local leaders to determine a path forward. I stand ready to assist any effort to address this situation and support Montana jobs.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester