

United States Senate

April 29, 2024

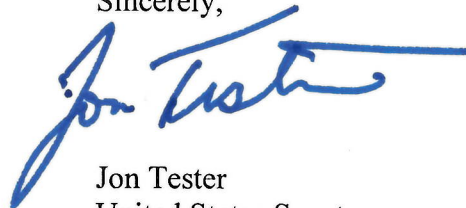
Dear Technical Management Team:

I write to urge the Technical Management Team (TMT) to take into consideration current drought conditions when setting summer draft limits for the Hungry Horse Project. Last year, the Flathead and Clark Fork basins in western Montana experienced severe drought conditions resulting in significant impacts across the region including historically low water levels in Flathead Lake. A lesson learned from 2023 is action must be taken early to try to mitigate the worst case scenarios when summer months arrive. As such, I encourage the TMT to take action now on the summer draft limits to put the region in the best possible position to manage the drought.

In establishing summer draft benchmarks, the TMT will play a uniquely important role in assisting management of regional dam operations and reservoirs, especially if the upcoming May forecast predicts a year like 2023. Unfortunately, the information we have now on current snowpack and forecasts suggest that drought conditions will likely persist into the summer of 2024. That's why acting on the May forecast is critical for Hungry Horse Project management as it is the primary storage reservoir in the upper basin. Early attention to these drought forecasts will ensure that the Bureau of Reclamation has the tools it needs to effectively manage the Hungry Horse Project and balance the many interests at stake across western Montana.

Flathead Lake is extremely important to Montana's residents and economy. All of us in Montana want to see Flathead Lake at or near full pool during the summer months. In the coming weeks and months, I stand ready to work with the TMT, state, local and tribal governments and the Department of Interior to help ensure the region is in the best position to mitigate drought conditions. Montanans have an opportunity here to work together to achieve the best possible results. Thank you for your work on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester
United States Senator