

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
TELEPHONE CONVERSATION RECORD

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REGULATORY
COMMISSION

TIME: 11:25

DATE: 11-3-98

PROJECT NAME: Kerr, P-5

CALL TO: Robert Grieve OF DLC

CALL FROM: William G. Myers, Jr. OF Pointer Scenic Cruisers
(406) 837-5617)

Summary of Conversation

Mr. Myers called to request our assistance in determining whether operation of the Kerr Project is in keeping with the license requirements [i.e., the modified 4(e)-like conditions] and as forecast in the Commission's final environmental impact statement (EIS), issued July 1996. Mr. Myers is concerned with Flathead Lake being drafted severely and prematurely, thus affecting his business and others in the Big Fork area (recent articles in the Missoulian and Big Fork Eagle reported same).

Mr. Myers reported that the fishery studies (ramping rate studies) succeeded in reducing lake levels over those of a normal year. In addition, Montana Power (MPC) is operating the powerhouse at flows in the 12,500 cfs range with only about a 3200 cfs inflow. This resulted in severe, uncommon drafting during September and October. Mr. Myer reports that the lake drawdown is one month ahead of what typically occurs. This will require he and others to remove their boats and lose business. Boats are usually pulled around December 1.

The lake was at 2889.63 feet today and is dropping a couple of inches per day. Based on the modeling in the EIS, lake elevation should be 2892 at the end of October.

Mr. Myers stated that Mr. Lance Alias (MPC) said that Bonneville ordered the drawdown (yet no increases in flow from Hungry Horse). Mr. Myers also reports that MPC had a press release in the paper on releases, but that the release was dated after the drawdown.

(See attached news article from the Missoulian)

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Missoulian online

Flathead Lake water level dipping low

By DON SCHWENNESEN Lee Montana Newspapers

Flathead's lake level is dropping fast and early this fall, worrying boat owners and marina operators who may need to pull boats out quickly or see them stranded in shallow harbors.

Residents say they wish they'd been given some warning.

"I have 40 boats in our marina that are going to be high and dry," said Faye Hustis of Bigfork Marina, who figures she may have two weeks or less to get them out.

Doug Averill of Flathead Lake Lodge said the cruise season for visitors aboard the *Questa*, the lodge's historic racing sloop, will end this week.

"It puts us out of business on the sailboat," he said. "When we lose 12 inches (from the lake level), that's about it."

The lake level, which has held steady at about 6 inches below full pool through the summer, was down a foot as of Monday and was dropping at about 5 inches per week.

Lance Elias of Montana Power Co. in Butte said it could be down 2 feet by Sept. 28.

The problem is that water is flowing into Flathead Lake only about half as fast as it's flowing out through Montana Power's Kerr Dam at the foot of the lake.

Kerr Dam is releasing about 8,000 cubic feet of water per second to create a steady flow in the lower Flathead River as part of a study led by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

The study was required as part of the federal process to renew the license for Kerr Dam, Elias said. It's designed to gauge how the dam should be operated to reduce impacts on the lower river.

It was required by the federal Department of Interior as one of the so-called "4-e conditions" placed on the dam license under section 4-e of the Federal Power Act.

"Typically, I don't think 8,000 (cfs) would be that unheard of" at Kerr in September, Elias said.

But this year's very dry summer has reduced the upstream Flathead River flow to about 4,000 cfs, half of what is flowing out.

Hungry Horse Dam, which was releasing as much as 7,000 cfs from mid-July to mid-August to augment flows in the lower Columbia River, has reduced water releases since then.

It is now releasing just enough water to keep the Flathead River flow at about 3,600 cfs at Columbia Falls.

The falling lake level "could cause some people some serious trouble" if they are unable to get their boats out, said Jim Tebay of Woods Bay Marina.

He's been phoning customers who are out of the area "and getting their boats in" for them.

But Tebay saw a rainbow in the falling lake level because it's prodding boat owners who procrastinate about getting their boats winterized until late in the fall.

"When you have 200 boats to winterize, you can't do it in a day," he said with a laugh.

Don Schwennesen is editor and publisher of the Big Fork Eagle.

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