

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 22, 2023

Board of Lake County Commissioners
106 4th Avenue E, Room 211
Lake County Courthouse
Polson, MT 59860

Board of Flathead County Commissioners
800 South Main
Room 302
Kalispell, MT 59901

Dear County Commissioners,

As you are well aware, the level of Flathead Lake is concerning to myself and many other Montanans. Low water levels have effects that ripple across the state, affecting many Montanans and their businesses far beyond your counties. Flathead Lake was reportedly a shocking 26 inches below full pool and the state is facing a drought. There have been worse droughts in recent history where the lake did not reach such disastrously low levels. This leads to serious questions about why this is happening and what can be done to mitigate this problem.

I wrote to the Bureau of Reclamation on July 21st and my office received a response on August 21st. I am attaching my initial letter and the BOR response here. Given their response and the continued concerns with Flathead Lake and the Kerr Dam, I am writing to request information about the Technical Management Team (TMT) meeting that was held, as well as other information that will be useful to me as I try to address this issue. Your response to the following questions would be greatly appreciated:

- If the proposed increased flows would not be enough water to alleviate the concerns of the irrigators and recreationists around the lake, then how much-increased flow would be able to accomplish this?
- What information or evidence is available that shows that these potential releases would hurt the project's ability to refill next year?
- The Department of Interior has suggested that the TMT has concerns about biological implications related to these potential releases. Could you please detail these concerns?
- Is there need for concern about the management of these dams and reservoirs? If so, how can management be improved?
- Is there anything that can be done to help manage these waters more efficiently so that we do not face an issue like this in the future?

Thank you for your continued vigilance and work in trying to help solve this problem. In the coming weeks, we can all find a solution to help with the low water levels while mitigating potential negative externalities. Please provide a response at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt M. Rosendale, Sr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matthew M. Rosendale, Sr.
Member of Congress