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*From the President* Clint Krumm

Every year I am continually amazed at the support and generosity we receive. During 2010, the Bighorn River Alliance saw participation and memberships reach an all-time high.

is still disagreement and controversy about how river flows are managed. We will continue to work with various management agencies in order to ensure that the voice of Bighorn River users is heard.

I hope you were able to get out and enjoy the river this year, or have plans to do so soon. Our membership includes many local anglers from the Fort Smith/Billings area, but we have members throughout the United States and even overseas. It is inspiring to meet people from all over who love this river. The Bighorn River remains one of the most spectacular and consistent trout fisheries in the world. It is our job to keep it that way. Our focus will always be on preserving, protecting, and enhancing this amazing resource. As always, thank you very much for your support.



- President  
Clint Krumm
- Vice-President  
Steve Hilbers
- Secretary  
Zoe Opie
- Treasurer  
Roger Hile
- Directors  
Dennis Fischer  
Hale Harris  
Matt McMeans  
John Sindland  
Shawn P. Williams
- Advisory Board  
Frank Johnson  
Doug Haacke  
William P. Yellowtail Jr.  
Mike Parnell  
John May

The Bighorn River drainage was blessed with abundant water this spring. There were some challenging fishing conditions in June and July, but the higher flows were instrumental in bringing back important insect hatches, such as Yellow Sallies, PMDs, and Tricos. We hope this trend of adequate moisture continues, and that the river returns to its former glory. While we are thankful for the moisture, there

The Alliance sponsored another successful Youth Adventure this year. Young anglers from all over the country were able to experience what this river has to offer. These young people are the lifblood of our sport, and the river conservationists of the future. Check out our website for information on the 2011 Youth Adventure week and how you can be involved.

*Carp Fest 2010*

This year the Alliance became the official sponsor of the annual Big Lip Invitational carp fishing tournament on Bighorn Lake. This fishing contest has been around for a number of years, but under the enthusiastic and capable chairmanship of John Sindland, the event was larger and more successful than ever. A number of two-person carp fishing teams

viewed for the coveted "carp cup" and other prestigious honors. This year's championship was won by Joe Caton and Seth Byler, with a total of 18 golden-lipped battlers brought to the net. Following the fishing tournament, a sizeable crowd enjoyed an excellent barbeque meal and entertainment by a great Bluegrass band. Special thanks to J.J. Hilbers and her staff who handled the food arrangements.

Raffle tickets and a silent auction helped raise money for the Bighorn River Alliance. Outstanding prizes included a Winston Blx fly rod, a custom boat net built by Merritt Harris, a Simms gear bag, and many other wonderful products.

Plans are underway to make the 2011 Carp Festival even bigger and better. The event will be held on July 8, 2011, so mark your calendar

### *“Carp Fest 2010” continued*

and plan to attend. Additional details will be announced soon.

We would like to thank the following companies who contributed gear and prizes for this event:

- Abel Reels
- Dan Bailey
- Merritt’s Landing Nets
- Simms Fishing Products
- RIO Fishing Products

- R.L. Winston
- Sage
- Stonefly Studio
- Westwater Products
- Wapsi Fly Inc.



### *Not just another Dam Run* by Keri McMeans

This year’s first annual “Dam Run” was enjoyed by participants and volunteers alike. This was a special event, celebrating the first opportunity since 2001 to enjoy spectacular views from Yellowtail Dam. As we all know, spring weather in Montana can be unpredictable. Much to our surprise and amidst all the rainy days, the sun welcomed a beautiful spring outing.

Numerous people involved led to the success of this event. First of all, thank you to all the participants who ran or walked. In addition to many local participants, several people traveled from Montana and Wyoming to enjoy the dramatic views Yellowtail Dam, Bighorn Lake, and Bighorn River offer. Additionally, thank you to all the volunteers and National Park Service Employees who helped with aid stations, race registration, timing, and security. We could not have pulled it off without these

generous people! Also, the event would not have been possible with out the help of all who made donations. Among those are Bozeman Trail Coffee Outfitters, Bighorn Trout Shop, Cottonwood Camp, Doug Gouge, First Interstate Bank of Hardin, Food Services of America, Graphic Imprints, Kingfisher Lodge, Mary and Rocky Zaic, Magic City Fly Fishers, Tongue River Valley Community Center of Wyoming, Eve Jacobs, and Zoe Opie.

The “Dam Run” was a success, raising over \$1,400 for The Bighorn River Alliance. The proceeds will be used to help fund the Youth Adventure week hosted by Bighorn River Alliance. The 2011 “Dam Run” will take place Sunday, June 12th. Please mark your calendars, start training, and make it a family weekend on the “Horn”!



### *Alliance Helps Create Bighorn River Side Channel Restoration Group* by Dennis Fischer

**T**he Bighorn River Alliance has joined forces with other advocates and agencies to establish the Bighorn River Side Channel Restoration Group. The Group’s purpose is to implement projects which will restore aquatic habitat in the side channels of the Bighorn River.

The drought period of the late 1990s and early 2000s allowed invasive plant species like Rus-

sian Olive and Salt Cedar to gain a foothold in areas where the water enters and exits side channels. These invasive species trap sediment which restricts water flow through these side channels.

Extremely high river flows in the main river channel during above-average runoff years have pushed rock and gravel into the entrances of side channels. The movement of this

material has greatly impeded, and even stopped water flow through the channels, causing them to be dry at all but the highest river flows. The public has been negatively affected by the loss of the side channel habitat. The Bighorn River is a world class trout fishery and major destination for fishermen from all over the country and the world. Fishermen have lost the use of side channel areas that once provided

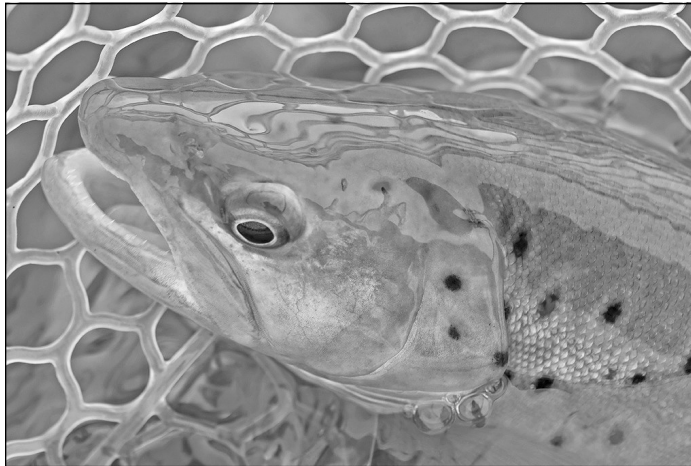
*Continued on pg. 4*

## Bureau of Reclamation Opens Operating Criteria for Comment *by Doug Haacke*

In mid-November, the Montana Area Office of the Bureau of Reclamation emailed a draft of the *Bighorn Lake Operating Criteria Evaluation Study and Report* to stakeholders and a number of governmental agencies, asking for written public comments by January 28, 2011. The report is 35 pages in length, and in addition to text commentary, contains a number of graphs, pictures and tabular data. Its purpose is spelled out in the report: “Based on input provided from all of the various interests attending the issue group meetings, the Bighorn Lake operating criteria was reviewed and studies were prepared to determine if modifications could be made to these criteria which would improve the overall operations and enhance the benefits derived from the Yellowstone Unit.” In essence, the modified operating criteria calls for lake levels at least 8 feet higher than in years past, and sets a minimum target lake elevation just 22 feet below the top of the conservation pool which is 13 feet higher than average. The draft document extols the many “benefits” of higher lake elevations, but curiously ignores or, at the very least, overlooks any downside.

If you live, work or recreate on the Bighorn River, you’ll have noticed some these “benefits” during the last three years while this modified operating criteria has been implemented. Minimal to sub-minimal flows reminiscent of several of the drought years during the winter, and record setting and/or

sustained high volume river releases during runoff in the spring are just two of the river “benefits” of the modified criteria, which calls for keeping lake levels 8 feet higher than average or higher. Lake users have been enjoying the “benefits” of inundated and



*Another big brown in the net*

unusable campgrounds, unusable floating docks and restrooms, and driftwood obstructions. The good news is that anyone who cared to water ski in the near-freezing temperatures during the past few Memorial Days near Horseshoe Bend (near the south end of the lake) could have done so under the new operating criteria, but only a handful did.

If you’re like me, when you read this document, you’re left wondering just what interests are being served by higher lake levels? The report shows a huge boost to lake levels, so clearly the new criteria is great for lake recreation. The river, however, didn’t fare as well. It only showed small percentage increases in “improvements in percent of time [specific re-

leases are] provided”. Power generation didn’t get much help either, showing small gains overall, but negatives during key seasons such as December through February and July through August. As far as flood control, well, just ask anyone who ranches along

the river and has seen their property wash away, or has used Grant March Fishing Access Site before it was lost to flooding in 2008 (flooding which occurred in essentially a normal water year).

Its time we speak our minds about Reclamation’s water management policy. Fire up your email and let them know we won’t tolerate them favoring lake recreation over river recreation any longer. We’re sick and tired of our friends and clients cancelling trips because of high water. We’re fed up with losing age classes of fish because the eggs are being stranded and/or the side-channels getting dewatered. Ask Reclamation to draft the reservoir sufficiently to easily manage spring runoff. Remind

**“The draft document extols the many ‘benefits’ of higher lake elevations, but curiously ignores or, at the very least, overlooks any downside.”**

*Continued on pg. 4*

### “Operating Criteria” continued

them that all stakeholder’s interests can be satisfied with lake elevations at or below full pool and not a half dozen feet in to the flood pool. Send them pictures of you, your friends *and* your clients to remind them that the river supports an important economy,

an economy not destined to be buried under silt in the coming years, but one that can continue to grow with a fair and equitable management approach.

A copy of the draft operating criteria can be obtained at the Reclamation website at:

[http://bighornriver.org/uploads/operating\\_criteria\\_evaluation.pdf](http://bighornriver.org/uploads/operating_criteria_evaluation.pdf)  
Send your comments to Lenny Duberstein at [lduberstein@usbr.gov](mailto:lduberstein@usbr.gov) by January 28, 2011 or call Lenny at (406) 247-7331.



**“Remind them that the river supports an important economy”**

### “Side Channel Restoration” continued

extraordinary fly fishing opportunities. The loss of side channel spawning habitat and fish rearing areas for the development of young trout has been detrimental to the health of the Bighorn River’s trout population. The loss of the side channel habitat also contributes to

and sediment deposits that have resulted in the disappearance of the side channels of the Bighorn River. The project will reestablish fish habitat, angling opportunities, and enhance the overall health of the river. Two of the larger and longer river side channels, the



*Black Angus on the river bank, a familiar sight on the Bighorn.*

downstream flooding and erosion because the main stem of the river must carry all of the flow which increases the river’s velocity. The degradation of the fishing experience, plus the excessive erosion of farm and ranch land, has a significant negative impact on the economy of southeastern Montana.

The Bighorn River Side Channel Restoration Project will remove invasive plant species

Picture Channel and Cline’s Channel, have been selected as the first project areas. Participants in the Bighorn River Side Channel Restoration Group include the Bureau of Reclamation, who has engineered the side channel sediment

and river rock removal; and the USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Service, which has quantified and mapped the areas where the invasive species removal will take place. They will also coordinate easements and professional eradication services. The Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks will help determine the flows needed through the side channels and help with the neces-

sary permits for streambed alteration. The Bighorn County Conservation District Council brings expertise in technical, permitting and funding issues. The Bureau of Indian Affairs will also participate, as the project area lies entirely within the boundaries of the Crow Indian Reservation. Magic City Fly Fishers, the Trout Unlimited and Fly Fishermen’s Federation chapter in Billings, Montana will also participate. Their organization represents a nationwide interest in the Bighorn River. The Western Area Power Administration agency of the US Department of Energy schedules the electricity generation of the power plant at the Yellowtail Dam on the Bighorn River. WAPA is dedicated to water conservation and may help with project funding. The Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership may also help with project funding.

The project is scheduled to begin in the late winter months of 2011. We feel that this project is a great opportunity to define ourselves as stewards of our resources.



## *Bighorn Youth Adventure 2010* Report from Frank Johnson

The 2010 Youth Adventure was held June 24 - 27. We again hosted 12 youngsters from across all America. The weather was perfect for our event, with pleasant days and evenings and just enough mosquitoes to keep us all slapping, swatting, and flopping our arms.

the Big Horn River Alliance to do something to introduce young people to some 'big time fly fishing' on the Big Horn River, and hopefully send them home with the motivation to share their experience and bring others into the sport.



Front row (left to right): Austin Linder, Chris Williams, Zoe Opie (Alliance Director), Taylor Walker, Brandt Robison, Carter Witt, Dennis Rammacher, Stone Phillips, Conor Kelly and Hale Harris (Alliance Director).  
 Back row: Matt Stout (Class of 2009 Volunteer), Evan Griggs (Class of 2009 Volunteer) Dennis Fischer (Alliance Director), Scott Voigt, Wray Sinclair, Colin McDowell, and Scott Ellington.

This year's participants were as follows:

- Conor Kelly – Clovis, CA
- Dennis Rammacher – Derby, NY
- Brandt Robison – Idaho Falls, ID
- Scott Ellington – Burlington, NC
- Scott Voigt – Lawrence, KS
- Carter Witt – Dardanelle, AR
- Austin Linder – Montgomery, MN
- Christopher Williams – Eagle, ID
- Wray Sinclair – Herndon VA
- Stone Phillips – Brevard, NC
- Taylor Walker – Sherman, TX
- Colin McDowell – Cary, NC

To provide a little background on this project we must go back to the summer of 2008. The observation was made that most of the fly fishermen we see are older fellows. Our Board of Directors then discussed the fact that someone should be doing something to bring younger people into the sport. Therein was the resolve of

The Adventure consists of four days of guided fly fishing and angling instruction on the Big-horn River, with two hours set aside each morning for fly tying classes. At the tying classes we tie flies that will be used during they days fishing. All of the youngsters catch fish using the flies they tie in class.

In addition to the fishing and tying, we added several evening events to our 2010 program:

The first evening we drove up to Bighorn Lake, where we held a 'mini' Carp tournament, as well as a Drift Boat Race. This was a lot of fun to watch.

The second evening was spent working thru the 'Smart Cast' casting challenge course. Everyone learned something about casting that evening. The kids discovered that there is always more to learn and new casting techniques to perfect.

**"Therein was the resolve of the Bighorn River Alliance to do something to introduce young people to some 'big time fly fishing' on the Bighorn River"**

## *“Bighorn Youth Adventure” continued*

The next evening we had a Blind (as in blind-folded) Woolly Bugger Tying Contest. Tying flies without being able to see what you are doing is a real challenge. The fun part is being able to watch the process. For this writer the highlight was Taylor Walkers beautiful yellow and purple woolly bugger creation that today graces my tying desk for all to see.

On the last evening of the event our Closing Banquet and Awards Ceremony was held at the Big Horn Trout Shop dining room. Some 50 people attended as all the kids received awards and gifts generously donated by the Fort Smith angling community. Speeches were given by all. Mr. Rick Williams, representing the National office of the FFF, offered kind words about our program. In a subsequent email Rick characterized the Bighorn River Youth Adventure as “a world-class event for young fly anglers.” We agree.

Carter Witt said: “The Bighorn River Youth Adventure was the trip of a lifetime.” Wray Sinclair wrote: “It was the best experience I have ever had, experiencing how awesome Montana is now makes me want to become a guide there. It was also the best fishing I have ever experienced.” Chris Williams thanked us by saying: “This program is amazing.”

Conor Kelly, a Youth Adventurer from Clovis, CA wrote: “We all had a great time and knew it was the experience of a lifetime. It is something we will never forget and I will tell everybody my age about it even if they don’t fly fish.” He went on to say: “After hearing about your idea, our club has started their own youth adventure, but I doubt it matches up to the Big Horn.”

Responding to Conor, we would say any youth adventure that gives young people an angling experience and teaches about fly fishing and fly tying is of real value. After all, it is our goal as fly fisherman to bring more youngsters into the

fold.

None of this would have been possible without the generosity of the many volunteers and donors who so kindly gave of their time and resources. Thank you so much. The guides who so generously shared their experience with the



*Taylor Walker admires the big rainbow she caught while fishing with long-time guide Merritt Harris*

group were the real key to the success of the event. Some 327 years of professional, guiding experience was represented by this impressive group. Many thanks to the following fly fishing professionals:

Kip Dean  
 Tim Church  
 Dave Hoffman  
 Dennis Fischer  
 Matt McMeans  
 Merritt Harris  
 Ken Hoines  
 Paul Dubus  
 Shawn Paul Williams  
 Kevin Kniss  
 Bob Krumm  
 Dave Palmer  
 Mark Gervase  
 Brent Downey  
 Clint Krumm  
 Mike Craig  
 John Sindland

For more information and photos about the Bighorn River Youth Adventure, go to [www.bighornriveralliance.org](http://www.bighornriveralliance.org)



**Mr. Rick Willams, representing the national office of the FFF, characterized the Bighorn Youth Adventure as “ a world-class event for young fly anglers.”**

## Bighorn River Alliance & Federation of Fly Fishers

Will again be sponsoring

# ***Bighorn River Youth Adventure 2011***

A great opportunity for young people to expand their knowledge of fly fishing is on the horizon. The Bighorn River Youth Adventure is currently taking applications for the 2011 program at Fort Smith, MT on the banks of the world famous Bighorn River. Twelve young fly fishers will be invited by the Bighorn River Alliance for a four day fly tying and fly fishing adventure. **All meals, lodging, airport shuttles and guides will be provided free of charge.** Air transportation to Billings or transportation directly to Fort Smith must be secured by the participant's parents, guardian, fly fishing club, or:

### ***NEW FOR 2011***

#### ***TRAVEL ASSISTANCE GRANTS AVAILABLE***

Travel assistance grants are available on a limited basis and granted based on financial need. Thru the generosity of donors and supporters we are pleased to be able to help with transportation expenses for some of our attendees. We are sincerely encouraging applications from youngsters who would otherwise be unable to attend our program. We are also encouraging fly fishing clubs to participate in the travel grant program.

The following is a quote from Mr. Rick Williams, FFF Director, Executive Council Member and Conservation Committee Representative (Rick observed the entire 2010 program and spoke at our closing Banquet):

"I can't say enough good things about the program you and the Bighorn River Alliance have put together for the youth anglers. *What a world-class experience for the kids* and what a *first-rate operation* you and the many other wonderful volunteers have created. We met so many wonderful folks there that we feel like friends already. We will be back up for the fishing again."

The dates for the Bighorn Youth Adventure will be June 23 through 26, 2011 with a travel day before and after. All clubs, councils and individuals are more than welcome to encourage applications from young fly fishers.

**APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS:** Any youth, male or female, ages 14 thru 18. All applicants must 'KIND OF' KNOW HOW TO FLY FISH AND 'KIND OF' KNOW HOW TO TIE FLIES. We are seeking youngsters who want to experience the joy of a 'big time' fly fishing adventure and are willing to return home to mentor other young people and encourage others to take part in the great activity of fly fishing.

During their stay at Fort Smith, the Bighorn River Alliance will provide at **NO COST** all of the meals beginning with lunch June 22<sup>nd</sup> (travel day) thru breakfast June 27<sup>th</sup> (travel day).

Lodging will be provided at **NO COST** by several of the local lodges (double occupancy) in and around Fort Smith.

Guiding will be provided by Mature, licensed, professional guides who have logged thousands of days on the Bighorn. There will be a total of 24 guide days at **NO COST** to the kids. (Our 17 volunteer guides for 2010 had combined guiding experience of more than 330 years.)

We take our hats off to the Fort Smith angling community for their generous donations!

The days will be busy as the young fly fishers will be picked up each morning at 7:00 am and taken to breakfast at a lodge or restaurant and at 8:00 or 8:30. They will begin their daily fly tying session which will last for two hours. The youths will be taught to tie the flies they will be fishing with that day. The fly tying sessions will be conducted by Frank Johnson (Buz Buszek Award 1984) or several other experienced professional fly tiers and teachers.

The guides will meet the participants at 10:00 and head to the river for fishing. Lunches will be served on the river. The guides will usually stay out on the river until sometime from 5:00pm and 6:00pm depending on how the fishing is or when evening activities or dinner is scheduled. The young people will be with a different guide each day to experience each guide's individual guiding and fishing techniques.

After dinner each evening, there will be other activities planned such as: Casting games, Fly tying games, and "You row it Carp Tourney" on Bighorn Lake.

On the evening of June 26<sup>th</sup>, we will have a special deluxe dinner and an Achievement/Awards Ceremony. All the participants will get an award. This will be a fun time! We will be asking suppliers and manufactures for help to provide some special gifts!

Anyone who is interested in attending must fill out an application form. The form asks for general information including names and addresses of both parents and applicants, questions regarding angler experience, health and diet questions, and more. There are also three essay questions at the conclusion of the application. The twelve youths asked to attend will be selected by the Bighorn River Alliance based upon their experience and the quality of their essay question answers. Application deadline is March 31, 2011

For more information please refer to the Bighorn River Alliance web site [www.bighornriveralliance.org](http://www.bighornriveralliance.org) Click on NEWS then look for Youth Adventure.

Call or email Frank Johnson with questions or to obtain an application:

Frank Johnson,  
11 Spring Creek Lane  
Sheridan, Wyoming 82801  
Phone 307-672-5164 or cell 307-752- 7083  
Email: [bighornjohnsons@gmail.com](mailto:bighornjohnsons@gmail.com)

# *Bighorn River Alliance*

*P.O. Box 7884*

*Fort Smith, MT 59035*

## *Statement of Purpose*

Understanding that the Bighorn River is potentially the finest trout fishery in America, it is our purpose to preserve, protect and enhance the quality of this fishery. In this understanding it is incumbent upon us, the users of the Bighorn to address the following issues and related concerns:

- **water flows**
- **bag limits**
- **angler populations**
- **angler access**
- **trout populations**
- **tackle restrictions**
- **water quality**
- **recreational easements and education**
- **general aquatic biology**



PRESERVING, PROTECTING, ENHANCING

**To join go to:**

**[www.bighornriveralliance.org](http://www.bighornriveralliance.org)**

All efforts shall be directed toward maximizing quality angling opportunity on the **Bighorn River**.

It is further the purpose of this organization of anglers and professionals to develop positive relationships and work together with all management agencies involved with the well being of the **Bighorn River**.

Organizational memberships will in no way be limited, but shall include as much representation as possible from all users of the Bighorn River.

The **Bighorn River Alliance** is a **non-profit** organization.