

Yellowtail Dam Water Supply and Projected Operations



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

October 2026



Bighorn River Basin Map Source: DEMIS Mapserver

October Operating Range			
Forecast	Minimum	Median	Maximum
Monthly Average Inflow (cfs)	1,820	1,865	2,160
Monthly Average River Release (cfs)	1,590	1,590	1,590
End of October Elevation (feet)	3626.6	3626.9	3629.0
October 2026 Inflow Forecast (kaf)			
October Volume			115
Percent of Average			69
Water Year	Historical Inflow		Rank
2026	164		13
2025	141		21
2024	242		2
2023	155		16
30 Year Average	167		

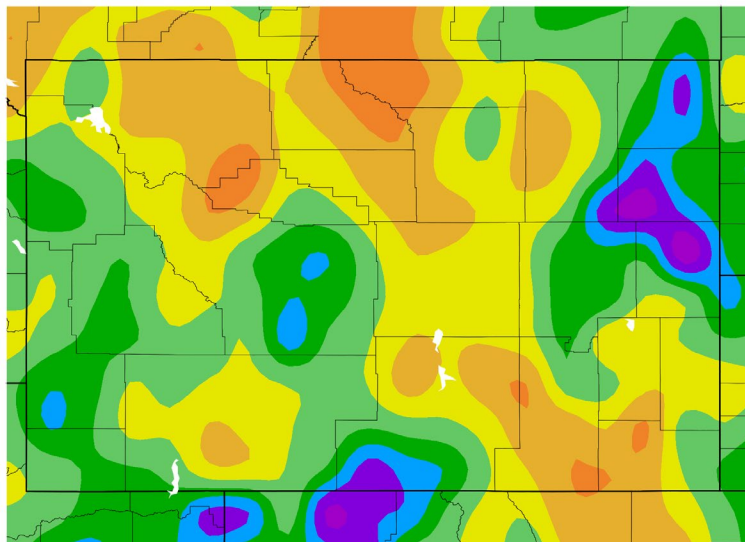


Climate Departure from Normal

September 1 through September 30, 2026

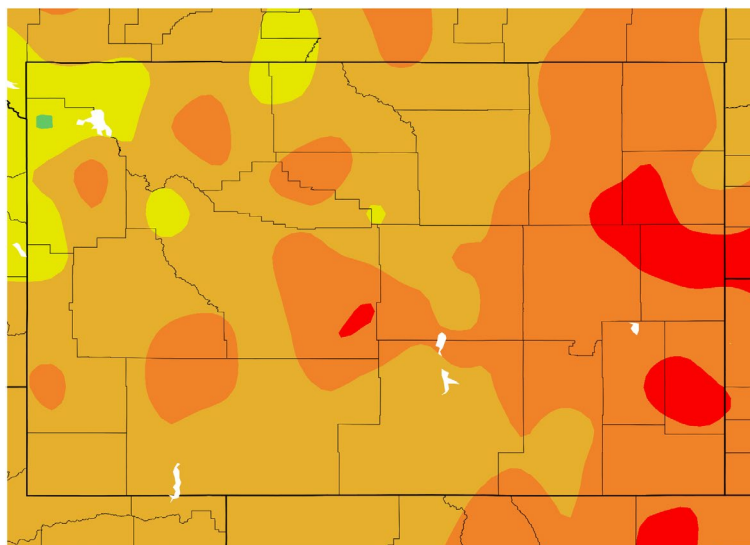
Precipitation

Departure from Normal (inches)



Temperature

Departure from Normal (°F)



HPRCC using provisional data from NOAA Regional Climate Centers

CLIMATE SUMMARY

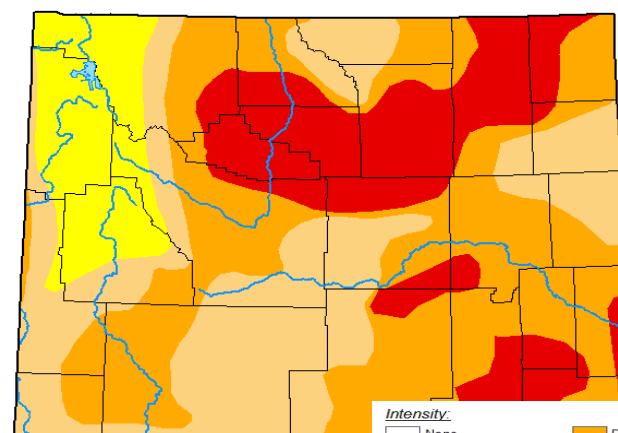
September precipitation across the Bighorn River Basin above Yellowtail Dam was below average except for the eastern portion of the Wind River basin, which was above normal. Temperatures for the month were above normal.

Based on the climate outlook for October, there is a 40-50% chance that precipitation will be below average in the basin. Temperatures have a 40-50% chance of being above normal.

Drought conditions in the Bighorn River basin range from abnormally dry to extreme.

Wyoming Drought Monitor Map

September 29, 2026



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

Intensity:

None

D0 Abnormally Dry

D1 Moderate Drought

D2 Severe Drought

D3 Extreme Drought

D4 Exceptional Drought

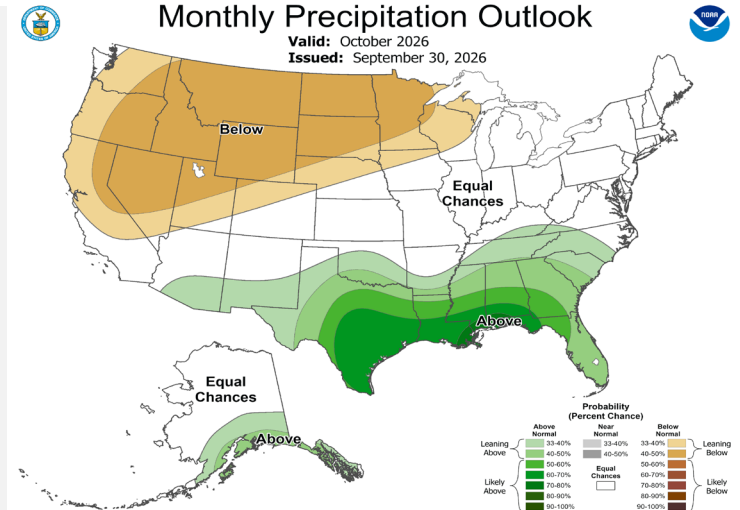
The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

October Climate Outlook

Precipitation Monthly Precipitation Outlook

Valid: October 2026

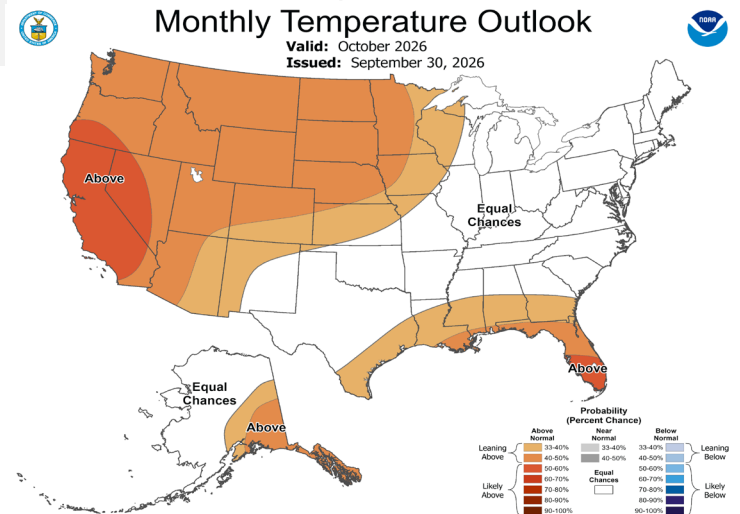
Issued: September 30, 2026



Temperature Monthly Temperature Outlook

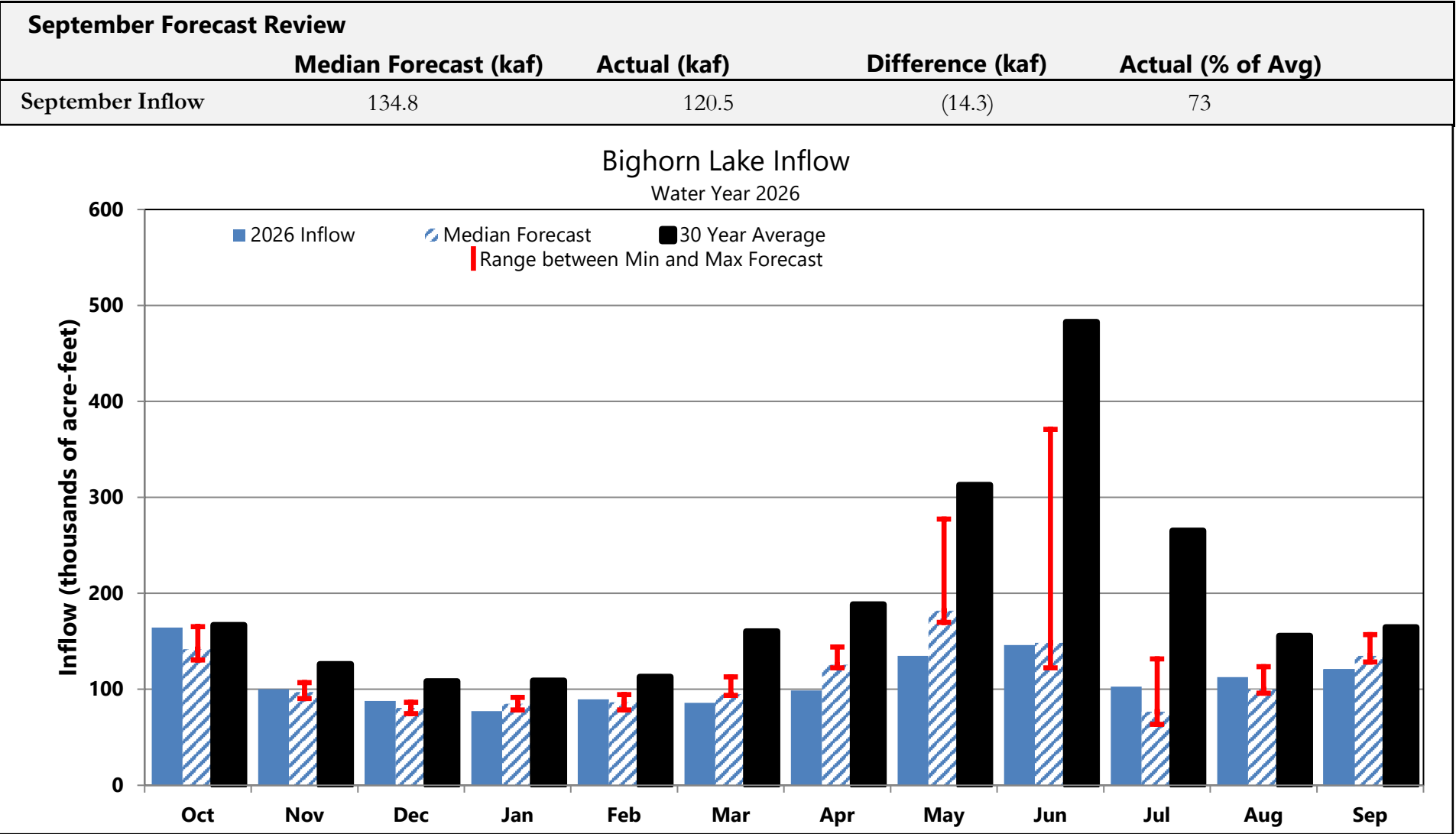
Valid: October 2026

Issued: September 30, 2026



FORECAST SUMMARY

NRCS SNOTEL data, streamflow data, climate data, and planned releases from Boysen and Buffalo Bill Reservoirs are used to compute an inflow forecast for Bighorn Lake. Actual September inflows were less than the minimum inflow forecast.

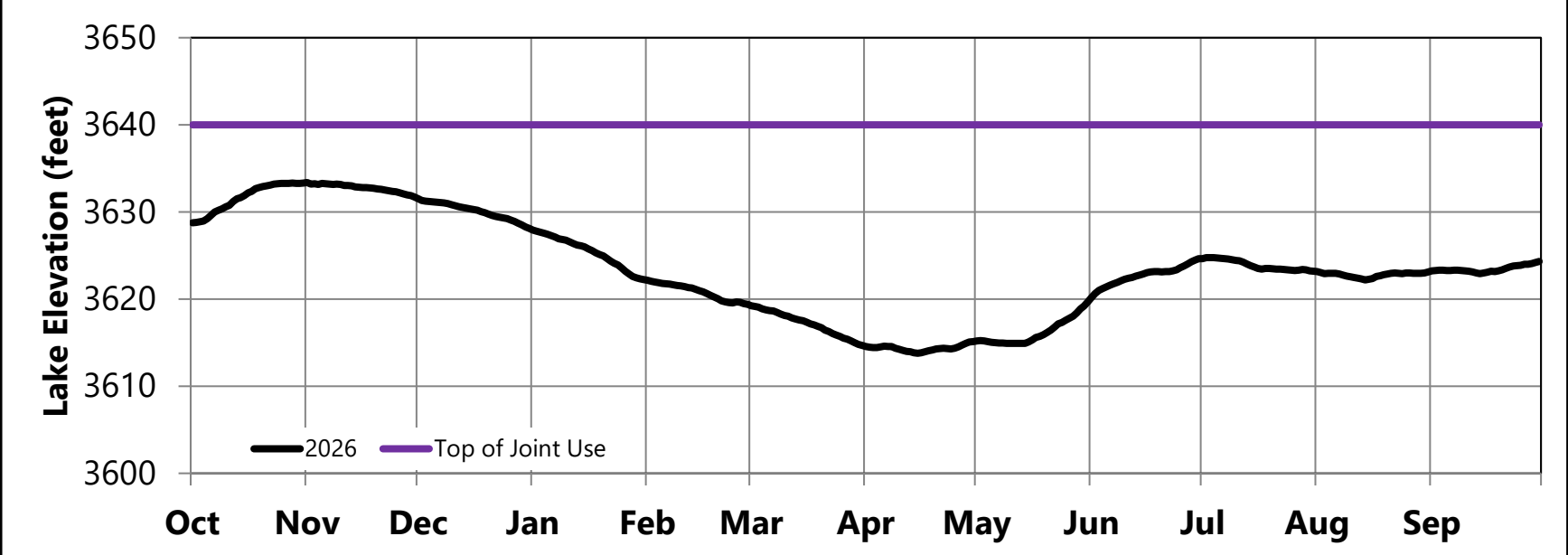


OPERATIONS REVIEW (October 1, 2025 through September 30, 2026)

Releases to the Bighorn River were increased to 1,680 cfs during September based on actual August inflows, forecasted inflows, and the operating criteria. The elevation of Bighorn Lake increased by 1.2 feet during September.

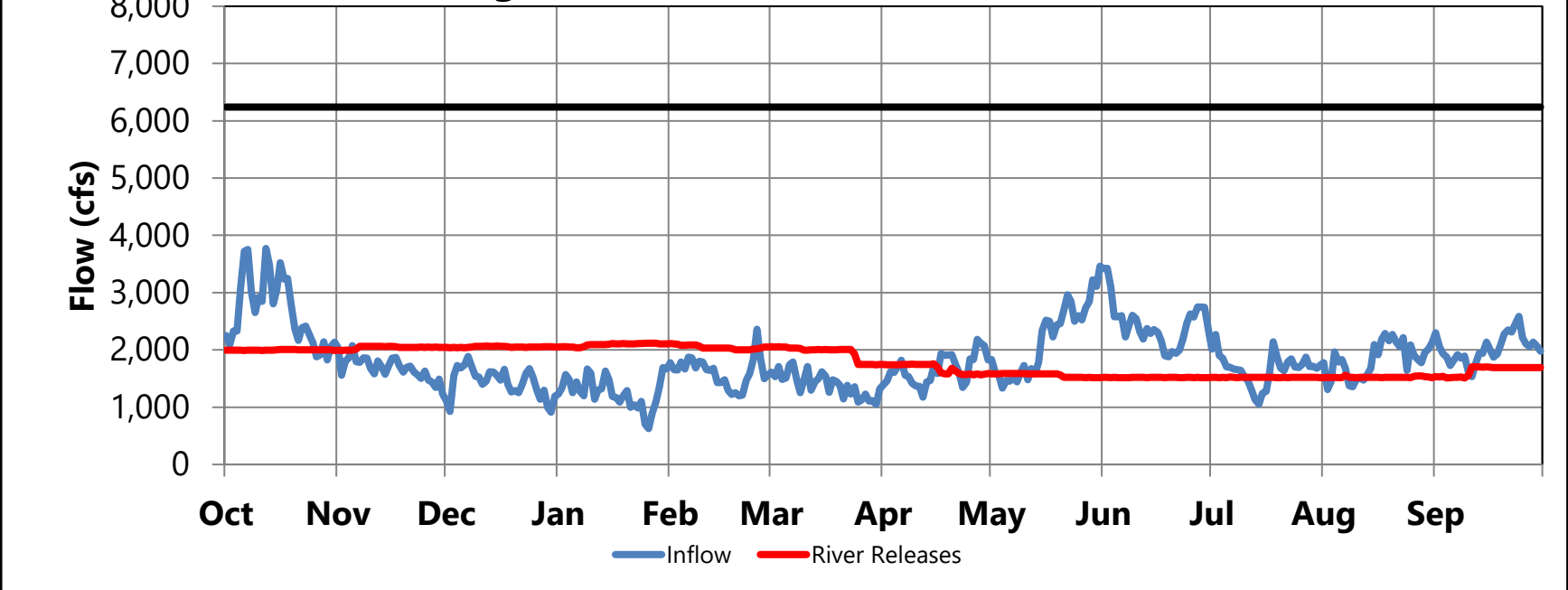
October 1 Storage Conditions				
	Elevation feet	Storage acre-feet	Percent of Average	Percent Full
Bighorn Lake	3624.3	848,005	96	84
Buffalo Bill	5363.4	422,077	94	65
Boysen	4710.2	494,913	88	67

Bighorn Lake Operations Water Year 2026



Average September Inflow			Average September Release		
	Monthly Avg cfs	Percent of Average		Monthly Avg cfs	Percent of Average
Bighorn Lake	2,025	73	Bighorn River	1,640	64
Buffalo Bill	325	77	Buffalo Bill Total Release	1,710	114
Boysen	755	97	Boysen Release	870	80

Bighorn Lake Inflow and Release



OPERATIONS OUTLOOK (October 1, 2026 through March 31, 2027)

During October, releases to the Bighorn River will decrease to 1,570 cfs. No additional release changes are expected during October unless there becomes unusually high or low inflow. The next Bighorn Lake storage targets used for setting releases from Yellowtail Dam are an end of October storage target of 3635 to 3640 feet and end of March 2027 storage target of 3617 feet. The end of October target is only achieved with a minimum release of 2,500 cfs. If the end of October target cannot be achieved, the end of March target is used to set releases based on forecasted inflows.

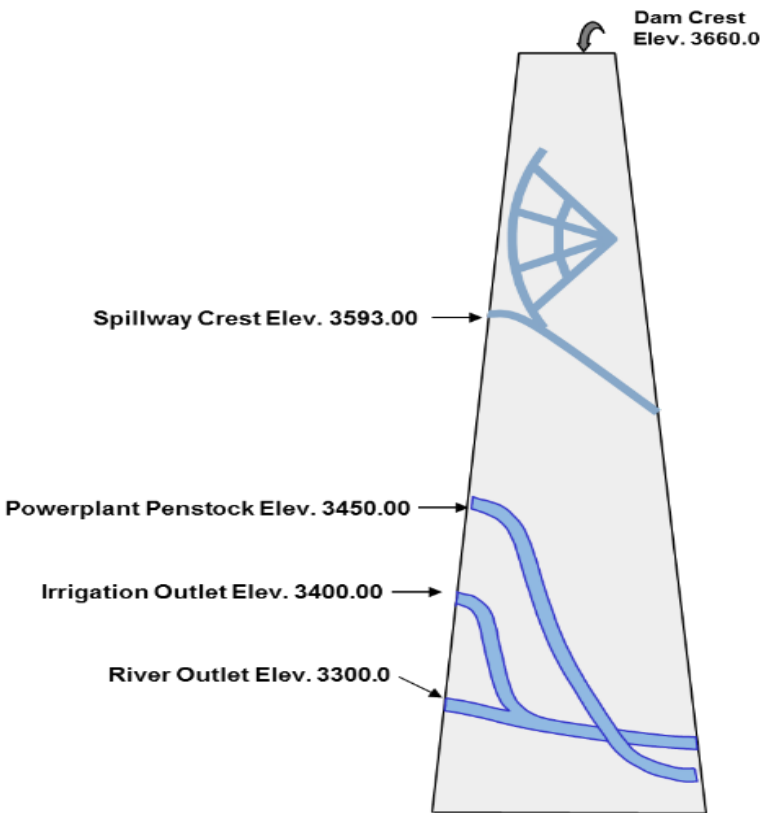
Median Inflow Conditions						
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Boysen Release (cfs)	499	400	400	400	400	405
Buffalo Bill Release (cfs)	638	203	203	203	203	203
Tributary Gain (cfs)	727	761	457	520	657	899
Monthly Inflow (cfs)	1,864	1,364	1,060	1,124	1,260	1,508
Monthly Inflow (kaf)	114.6	81.2	65.2	69.1	70.0	92.7
Monthly Release (kaf)	97.8	93.4	96.5	96.5	87.2	116.1
Afterbay Release (cfs)	1,591	1,570	1,570	1,570	1,570	1,888
River Release (cfs)	1,591	1,570	1,570	1,570	1,570	1,888
End-of-Month Content (kaf)	869.1	861.0	833.9	810.8	797.5	778.4
End-of-Month Elevation (feet)	3626.9	3626.0	3622.4	3619.1	3617.1	3614.0
Minimum Inflow Conditions						
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Boysen Release (cfs)	499	400	400	400	400	400
Buffalo Bill Release (cfs)	642	203	203	203	203	203
Tributary Gain (cfs)	678	761	457	519	655	899
Monthly Inflow (cfs)	1,820	1,364	1,060	1,122	1,259	1,503
Monthly Inflow (kaf)	111.9	81.2	65.2	69.0	69.9	92.4
Monthly Release (kaf)	97.8	92.8	95.9	95.9	86.6	92.2
Afterbay Release (cfs)	1,591	1,560	1,560	1,560	1,560	1,500
River Release (cfs)	1,591	1,560	1,560	1,560	1,560	1,500
End-of-Month Content (kaf)	866.3	858.9	832.4	809.8	796.9	801.4
End-of-Month Elevation (feet)	3626.6	3625.7	3622.2	3619.0	3617.0	3617.7
Maximum Inflow Conditions						
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Boysen Release (cfs)	499	400	400	400	400	1,095
Buffalo Bill Release (cfs)	642	203	203	203	203	797
Tributary Gain (cfs)	1,018	770	464	527	668	908
Monthly Inflow (cfs)	2,160	1,373	1,067	1,130	1,271	2,799
Monthly Inflow (kaf)	132.8	81.7	65.6	69.5	70.6	172.1
Monthly Release (kaf)	97.8	113.5	117.4	117.4	106.1	161.5
Afterbay Release (cfs)	1,591	1,907	1,910	1,910	1,910	2,626
River Release (cfs)	1,591	1,907	1,910	1,910	1,910	2,626
End-of-Month Content (kaf)	887.2	859.6	812.1	768.4	736.8	751.7
End-of-Month Elevation (feet)	3629.0	3625.8	3619.3	3612.3	3606.6	3609.3

OPERATIONS OUTLOOK (October 1, 2026 through March 31, 2027)

There is approximately 70 cfs of gain between Yellowtail Dam and Yellowtail Afterbay Dam from springs flowing into Yellowtail Afterbay. Total release from Yellowtail Dam is 70 cfs less than total release from Yellowtail Afterbay Dam. Unit 2 will be out of service for schduled maintenance through November 9.

Irrigation Demands Outlook						
Bighorn Canal (cfs)						
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Median Forecast	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minimum Forecast	0	0	0	0	0	0
Maximum Forecast	0	0	0	0	0	0

Power Generation Outlook						
Current Number of Units Available: 3 of 4						
Approximate Yellowtail Powerplant Turbine Capacity: 6,150 cfs						
Approximate Yellowtail Powerplant Scheduled Generation Limit: 4,160 cfs						
Yellowtail Powerplant Release (cfs)						
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Median Forecast	1,521	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,818
Minimum Forecast	1,521	1,490	1,490	1,490	1,490	1,430
Maximum Forecast	1,521	1,837	1,840	1,840	1,840	2,556
Yellowtail Powerplant Generation (gwh)						
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Median Forecast	34	33	34	34	31	41
Minimum Forecast	34	33	34	34	30	32
Maximum Forecast	34	40	41	41	37	58
Yellowtail Spill (cfs)						
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Median Forecast	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minimum Forecast	0	0	0	0	0	0
Maximum Forecast	0	0	0	0	0	0



Release Outlook by Outlet

Yellowtail Powerplant bypass releases are not expected through the end of March 2027.

OPERATIONS OUTLOOK (October 1, 2026 through March 31, 2027)

Projected elevations and the range of river releases are based on the median, minimum, and maximum inflow forecasts. End-of-month elevations and river releases vary based on the difference between forecasted inflow scenarios.

