

Yellowtail Dam Water Supply and Projected Operations



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

September 2026



Bighorn River Basin Map Source: DEMIS Mapserver

September Operating Range			
Forecast	Minimum	Median	Maximum
Monthly Average Inflow (cfs)	2,160	2,265	2,640
Monthly Average River Release (cfs)	1,625	1,625	1,625
End of September Elevation (feet)	3625.2	3626.0	3628.6
September 2026 Inflow Forecast (kaf)			
September Volume		135	
Percent of Average		82	
Water Year	Historical Inflow		Rank
2025	150		19
2024	162		14
2023	198		7
2022	159		15
30 Year Average	165		

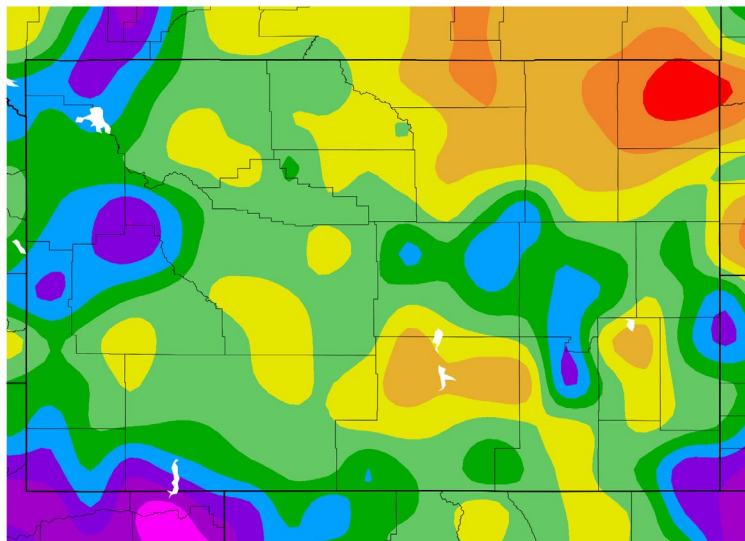


Climate Departure from Normal

August 1 through August 31, 2026

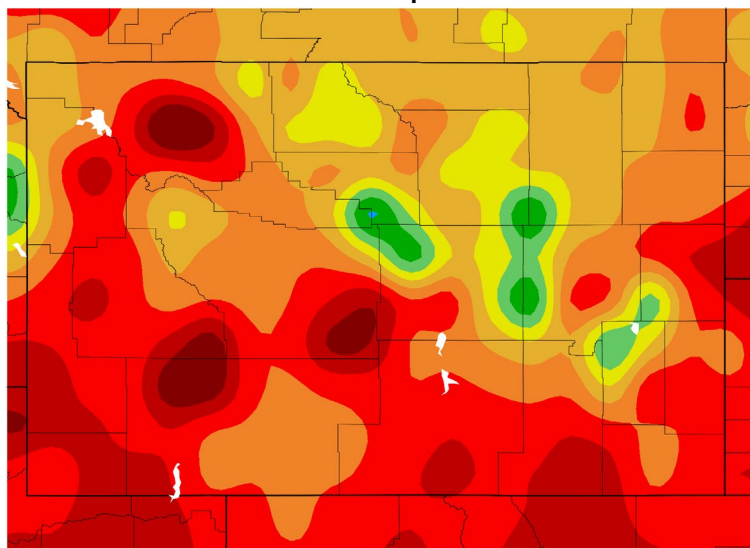
Precipitation

Departure from Normal (inches)



Departure from Normal (°F)

Temperature



HPRCC using provisional data from NOAA Regional Climate Centers

CLIMATE SUMMARY

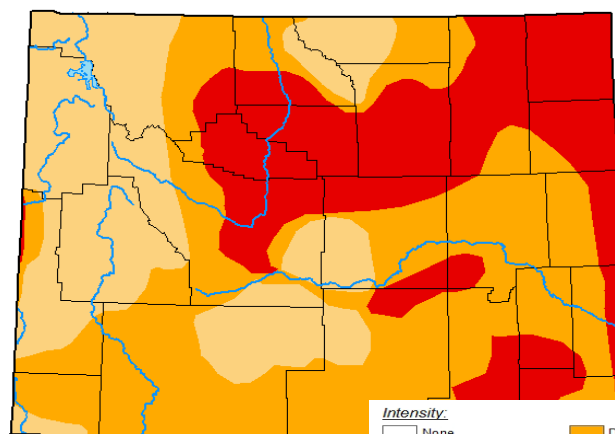
August precipitation across the Bighorn River Basin above Yellowtail Dam was generally near average except for the upper portions of the Wind and Shoshone River basins, which were above normal. Temperatures for the month were above normal.

Based on the climate outlook for September, there is an equal chance that precipitation will be above, below, or near average in the basin. Temperatures have a 33-40% chance of being above normal.

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

Wyoming Drought Monitor Map

September 1, 2026



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

Intensity:

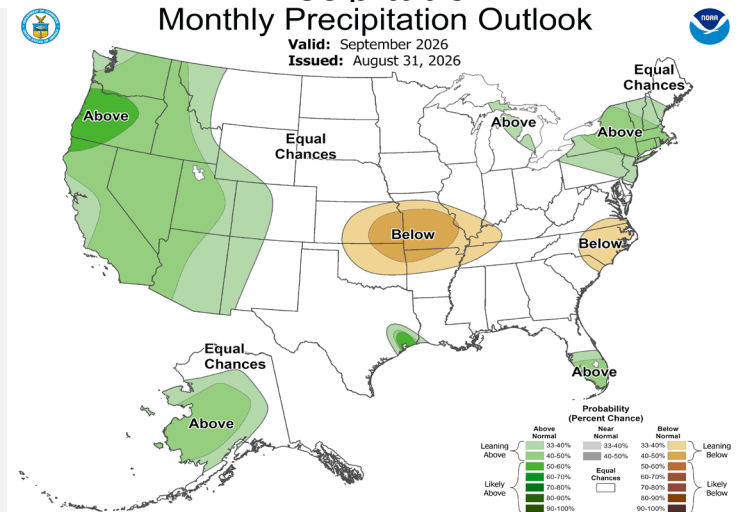
None D2 Severe Drought D3 Extreme Drought D4 Exceptional Drought
D0 Abnormally Dry D1 Moderate Drought

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>

September Climate Outlook

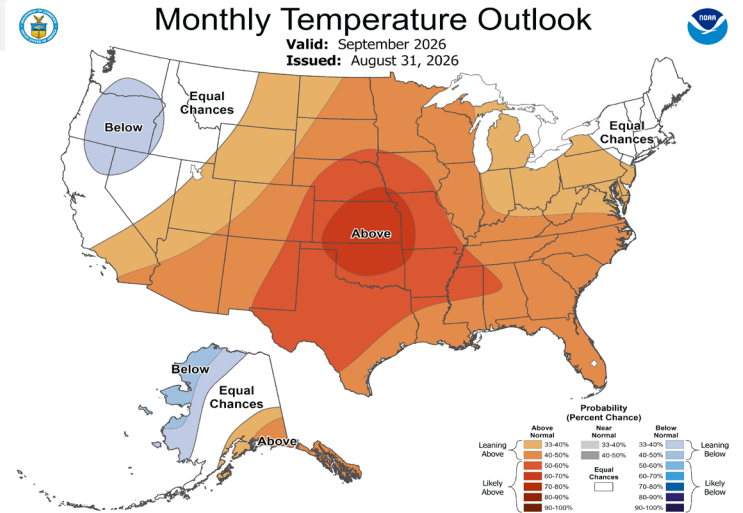
Precipitation Monthly Precipitation Outlook

Valid: September 2026
Issued: August 31, 2026



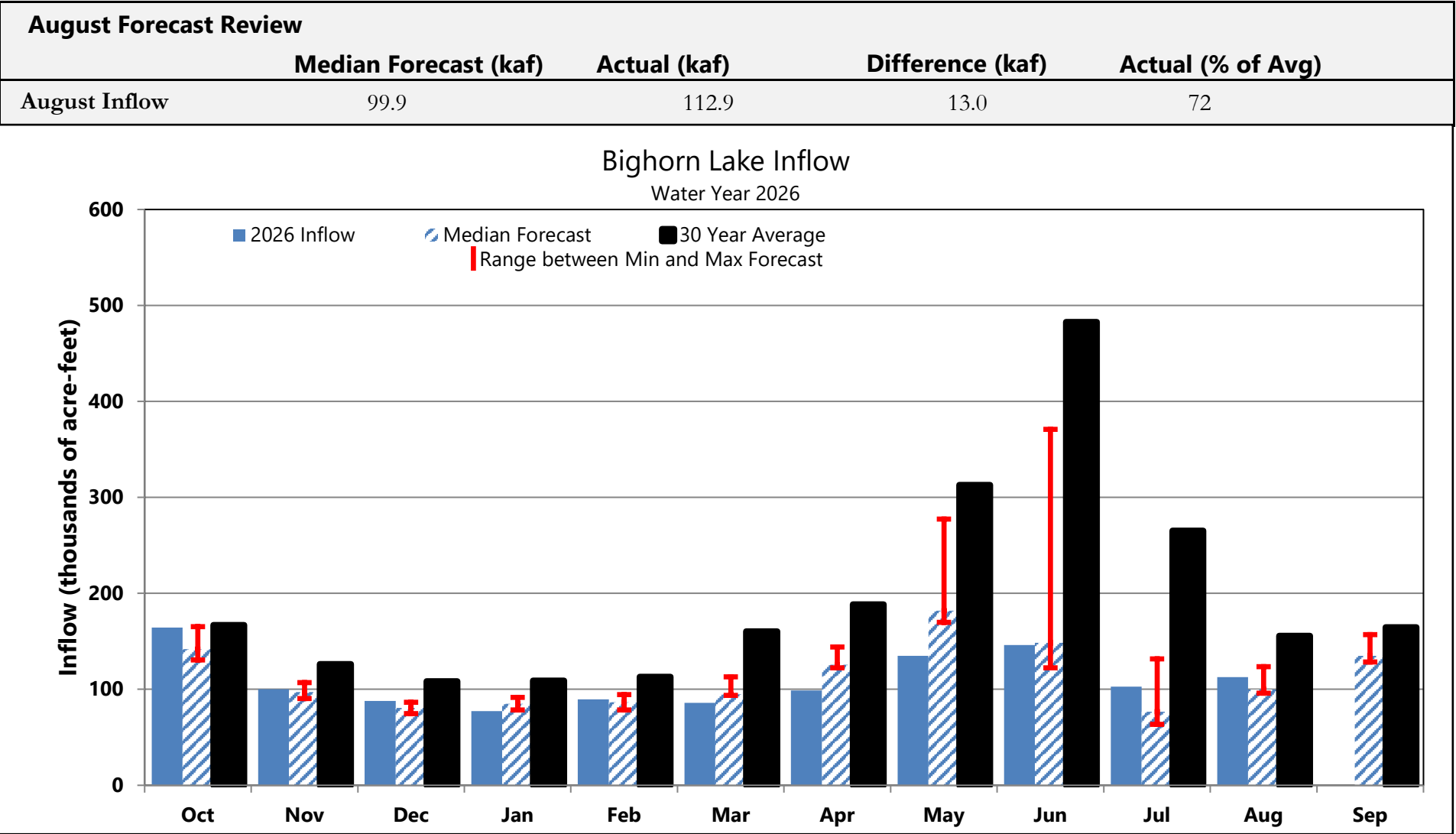
Temperature Monthly Temperature Outlook

Valid: September 2026
Issued: August 31, 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 August inflows were between the median and maximum inflow forecast.

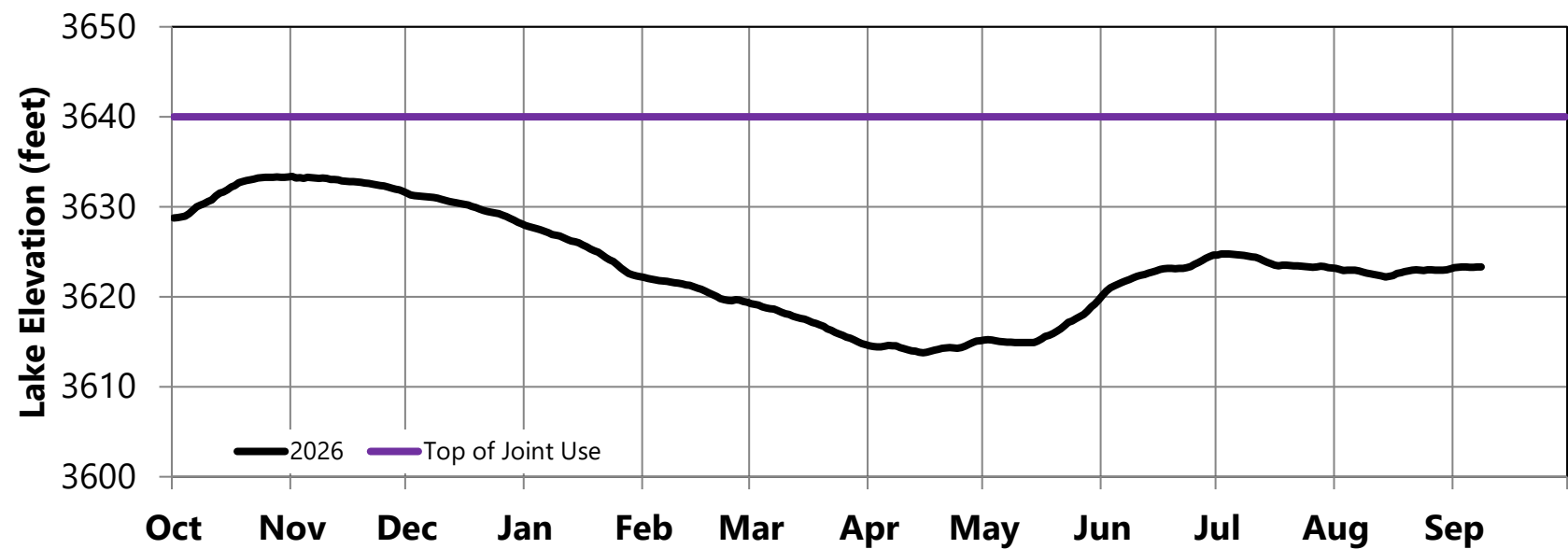


OPERATIONS REVIEW (October 1, 2025 through August 31, 2026)

Releases to the Bighorn River were maintained at 1,500 cfs during August based on forecasted inflows and the operating criteria. The elevation of Bighorn Lake decreased by 0.1 feet during August.

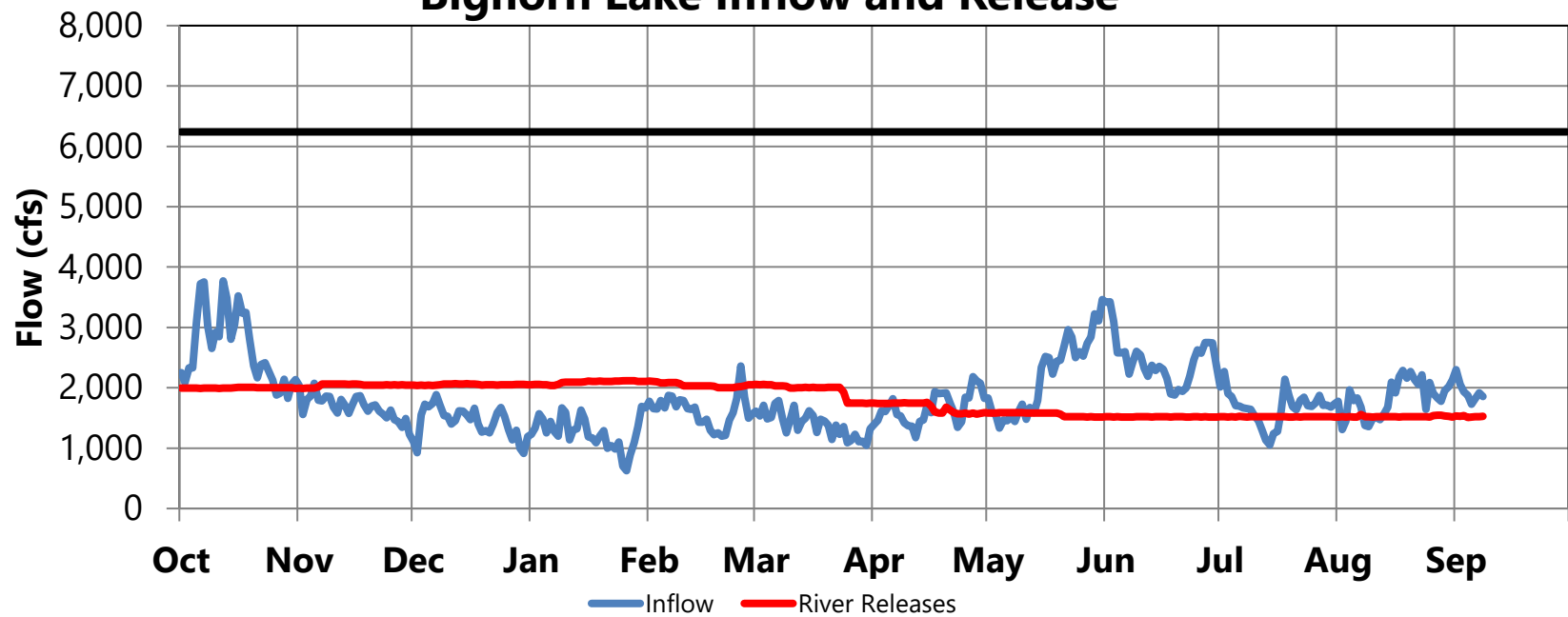
September 1 Storage Conditions				
	Elevation feet	Storage acre-feet	Percent of Average	Percent Full
Bighorn Lake	3623.1	838,802	96	83
Buffalo Bill	5375.0	504,538	98	78
Boysen	4710.6	501,743	87	68

Bighorn Lake Operations Water Year 2026



Average August Inflow			Average August Release		
	Monthly Avg cfs	Percent of Average		Monthly Avg cfs	Percent of Average
Bighorn Lake	1,835	72	Bighorn River	1,525	54
Buffalo Bill	485	69	Buffalo Bill Total Release	1,835	99
Boysen	530	66	Boysen Release	1,035	73

Bighorn Lake Inflow and Release



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

During September, releases to the Bighorn River will increase to 1,680 cfs, increases or decreases may be made depending on actual inflow and changing hydrologic conditions in the basin. 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.

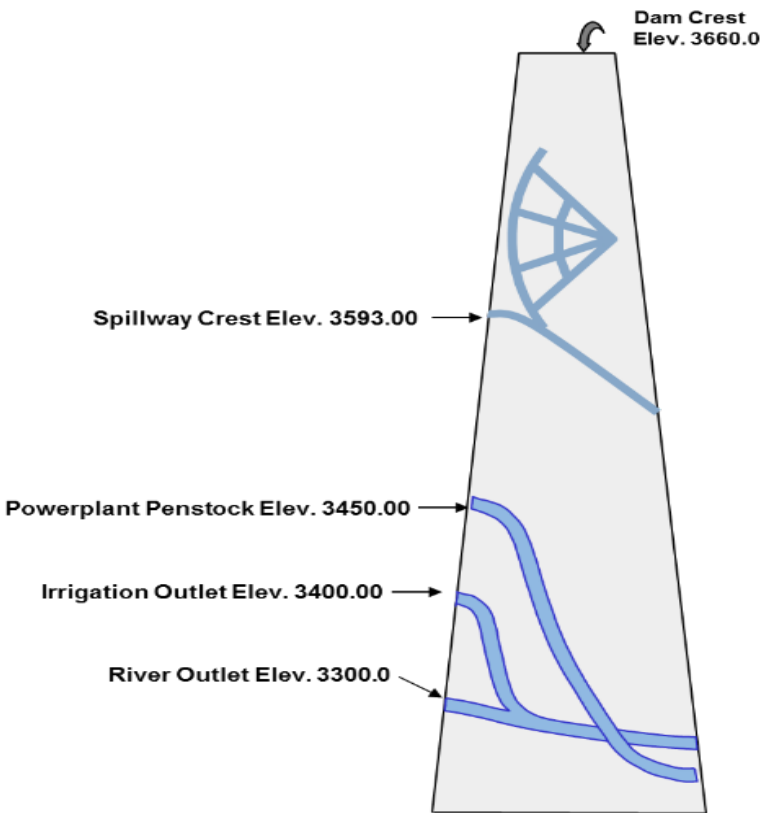
Median Inflow Conditions							
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Boysen Release (cfs)	901	800	400	400	400	400	408
Buffalo Bill Release (cfs)	1,587	644	203	203	203	203	203
Tributary Gain (cfs)	-224	727	771	465	529	670	909
Monthly Inflow (cfs)	2,265	2,171	1,374	1,068	1,132	1,273	1,520
Monthly Inflow (kaf)	134.8	133.5	81.8	65.7	69.6	70.7	93.5
Monthly Release (kaf)	116.2	103.3	100.0	103.3	103.3	93.3	121.6
Afterbay Release (cfs)	1,953	1,680	1,680	1,680	1,680	1,680	1,978
River Release (cfs)	1,626	1,680	1,680	1,680	1,680	1,680	1,978
End-of-Month Content (kaf)	861.5	896.0	882.0	848.7	819.3	800.6	776.7
End-of-Month Elevation (feet)	3626.0	3630.0	3628.4	3624.4	3620.4	3617.6	3613.7
Minimum Inflow Conditions							
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Boysen Release (cfs)	860	600	400	400	400	400	400
Buffalo Bill Release (cfs)	1,587	642	203	203	203	203	203
Tributary Gain (cfs)	-287	678	743	441	501	632	878
Monthly Inflow (cfs)	2,160	1,921	1,346	1,044	1,104	1,235	1,481
Monthly Inflow (kaf)	128.5	118.1	80.1	64.2	67.9	68.6	91.1
Monthly Release (kaf)	116.2	105.8	92.8	95.9	95.9	86.6	92.2
Afterbay Release (cfs)	1,953	1,720	1,560	1,560	1,560	1,560	1,500
River Release (cfs)	1,626	1,680	1,560	1,560	1,560	1,560	1,500
End-of-Month Content (kaf)	855.3	871.9	863.4	835.9	812.2	798.0	801.2
End-of-Month Elevation (feet)	3625.2	3627.3	3626.2	3622.7	3619.3	3617.2	3617.7
Maximum Inflow Conditions							
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Boysen Release (cfs)	901	899	400	400	400	400	1,060
Buffalo Bill Release (cfs)	1,587	642	203	203	203	203	797
Tributary Gain (cfs)	150	1,018	795	485	550	699	935
Monthly Inflow (cfs)	2,638	2,560	1,398	1,088	1,153	1,302	2,792
Monthly Inflow (kaf)	157.0	157.4	83.2	66.9	70.9	72.3	171.7
Monthly Release (kaf)	116.4	103.3	125.2	129.7	129.7	117.2	173.8
Afterbay Release (cfs)	1,956	1,680	2,104	2,110	2,110	2,110	2,826
River Release (cfs)	1,626	1,680	2,104	2,110	2,110	2,110	2,826
End-of-Month Content (kaf)	883.5	941.9	904.1	845.5	791.0	750.0	752.2
End-of-Month Elevation (feet)	3628.6	3634.4	3630.8	3624.0	3616.1	3609.0	3609.4

OPERATIONS OUTLOOK (September 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)							
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Median Forecast	327	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minimum Forecast	327	40	0	0	0	0	0
Maximum Forecast	330	0	0	0	0	0	0

Power Generation Outlook							
Current Number of Units Available: 2 of 4							
Approximate Yellowtail Powerplant Turbine Capacity: 6,150 cfs							
Approximate Yellowtail Powerplant Scheduled Generation Limit: 4,100 cfs							
Yellowtail Powerplant Release (cfs)							
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Median Forecast	1,883	1,610	1,610	1,610	1,610	1,610	1,908
Minimum Forecast	1,883	1,650	1,490	1,490	1,490	1,490	1,430
Maximum Forecast	1,886	1,610	2,034	2,040	2,040	2,040	2,756
Yellowtail Powerplant Generation (gwh)							
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Median Forecast	41	36	35	36	36	33	43
Minimum Forecast	41	37	33	34	34	30	32
Maximum Forecast	41	36	44	46	46	42	62
Yellowtail Spill (cfs)							
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Median Forecast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minimum Forecast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Maximum Forecast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

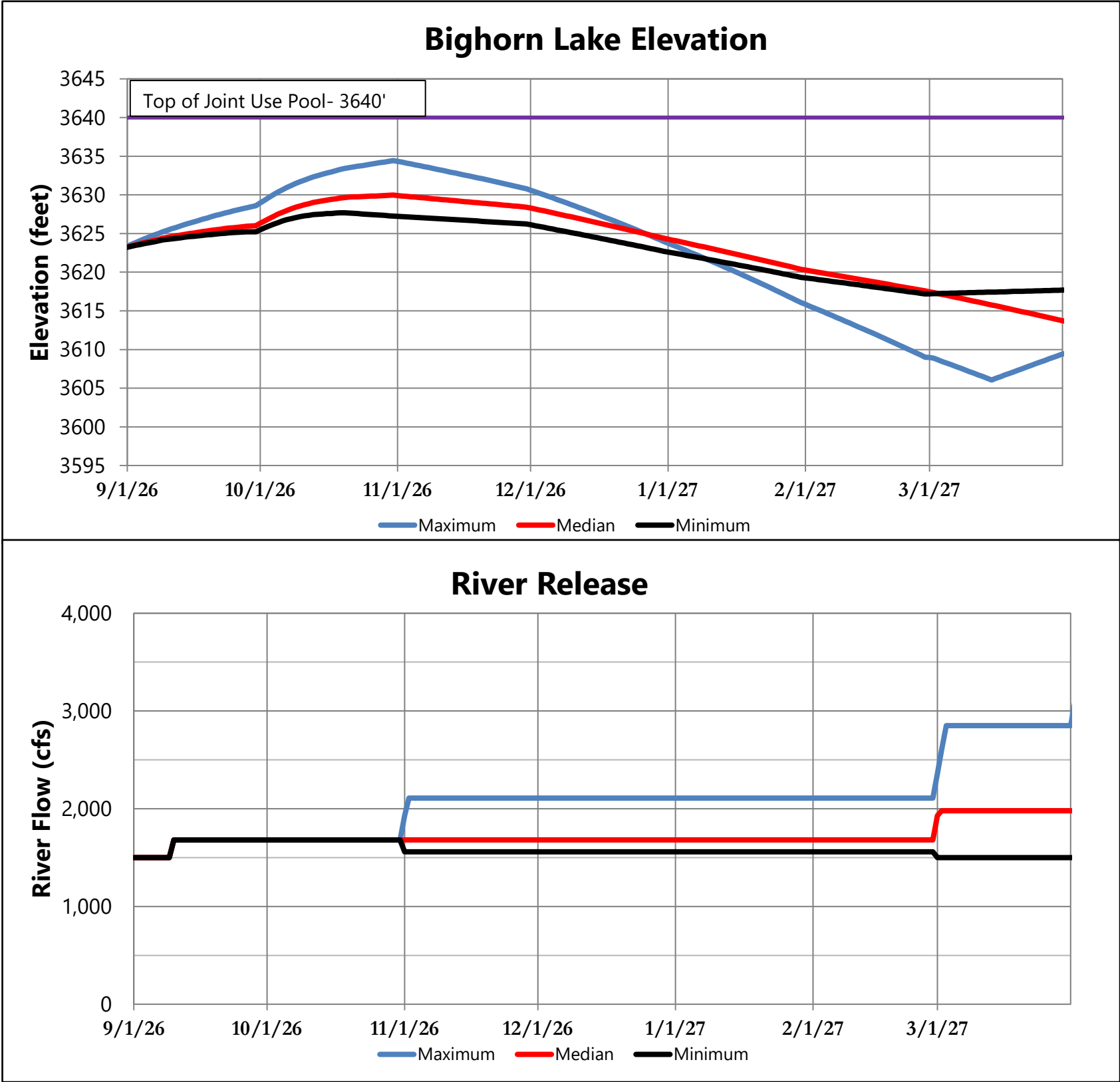


Release Outlook by Outlet

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

OPERATIONS OUTLOOK (September 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.



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Monthly Operating Plans, Current Conditions, Snowpack and Other Water Management Information
https://www.usbr.gov/gp/lakes_reservoirs/warepts/main_menu.html