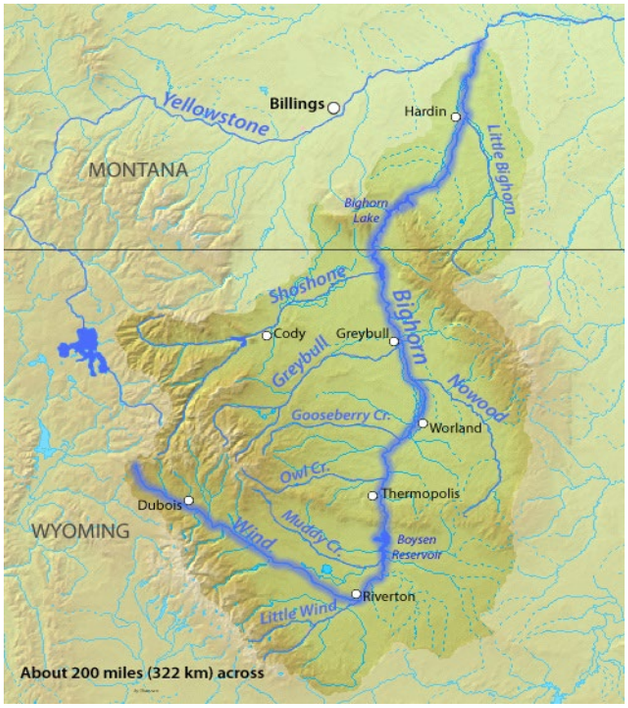
Yellowtail Dam Water Supply and Projected Operations

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

May 2026



Bighorn River Basin Map Source: DEMIS Mapserver

May Operating Range			
Forecast	**Minimum**	**Median**	**Maximum**
Monthly Average Inflow (cfs)	2,760	2,960	4,510
Monthly Average River Release (cfs)	1,550	1,580	2,430
End of May Elevation (feet)	3623.9	3625.5	3631.1

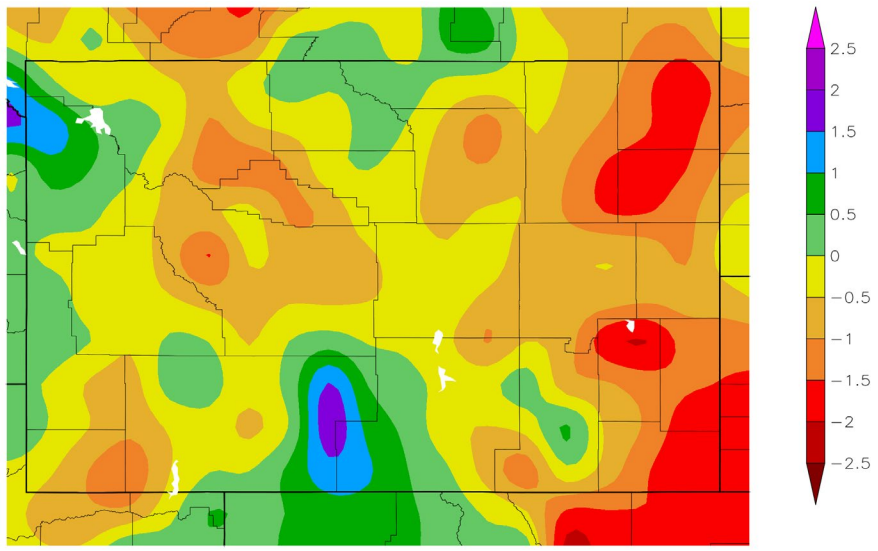
May - July 2026 Inflow Forecast (kaf)		
May - July Volume		407
Percent of Average		38
Water Year	**Historical Inflow**	**Rank**
2025	575	20
2024	871	18
2023	1,711	5
2022	877	17
30 Year Average	1,061	

Climate Departure from Normal

April 1 through April 30, 2026

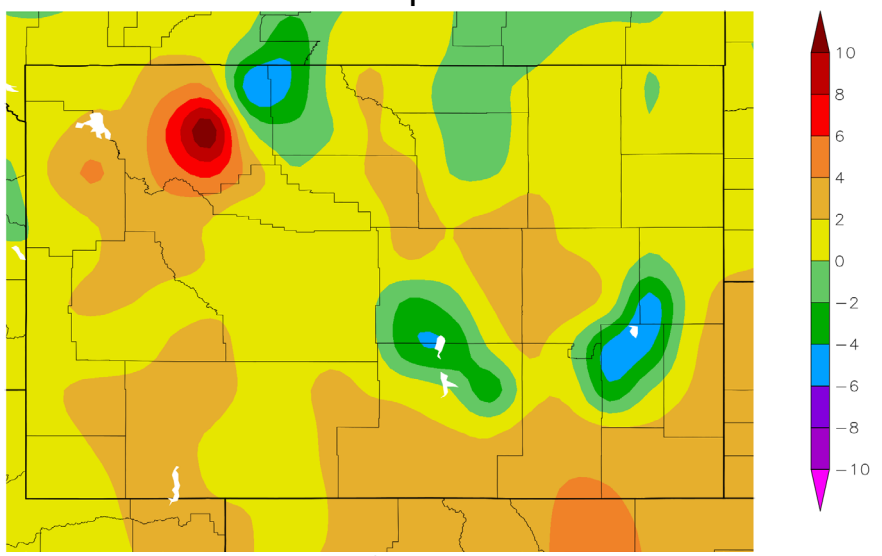
Precipitation

Departure from Normal (inches)



Temperature

Departure from Normal (°F)



HPRCC using provisional data from NOAA Regional Climate Centers

CLIMATE SUMMARY

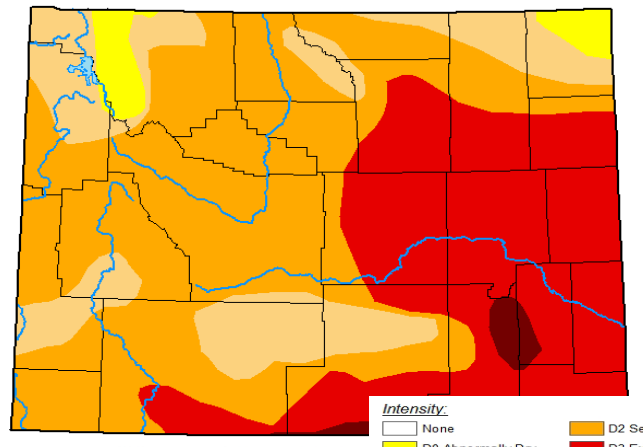
April precipitation across the Bighorn River Basin above Yellowtail Dam was generally below average, with only a few small scattered areas in the basin experiencing above average amounts. Temperatures for the month were warmer than normal except for a small area in the northern part of the basin, which was cooler than normal.

Based on the climate outlook for April, there is a 33-40% chance precipitation will be below average in the basin. Temperatures, however, have a 40–60% chance of being above normal.

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

Wyoming Drought Monitor Map

April 28, 2026



USDA NDMC

droughtmonitor.unl.edu

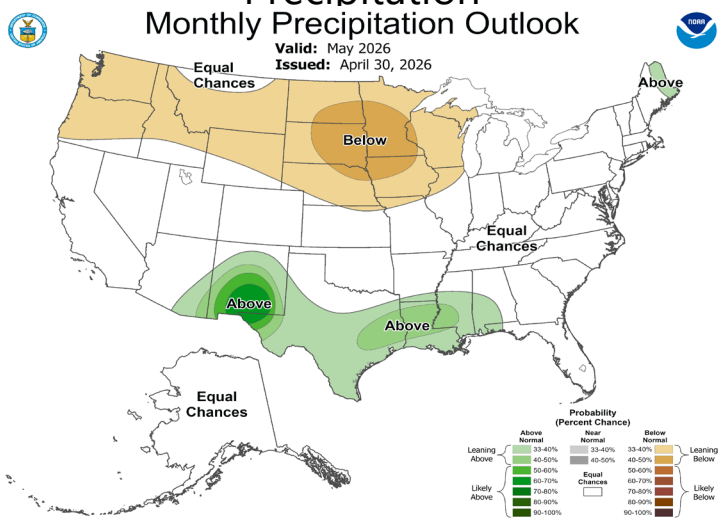
Intensity:

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

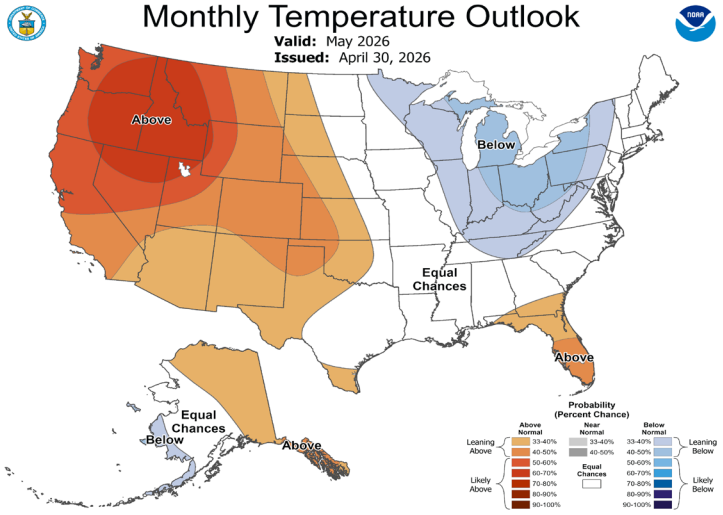
The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx

May Climate Outlook

Precipitation



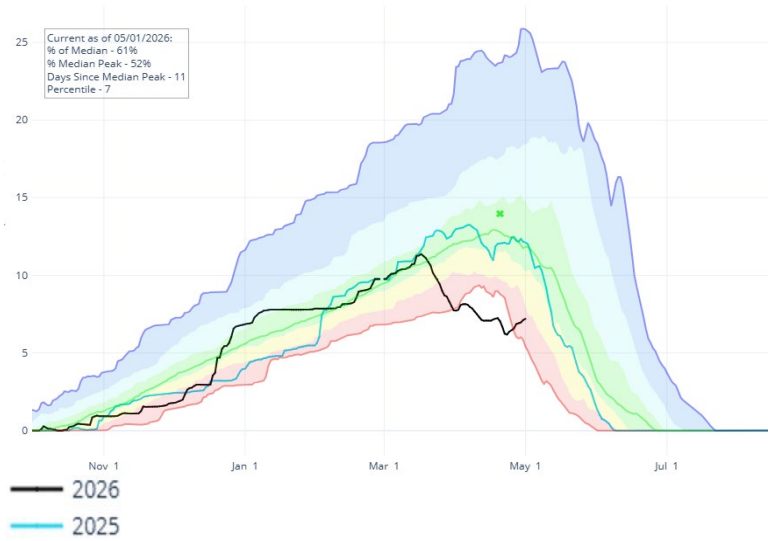
Temperature

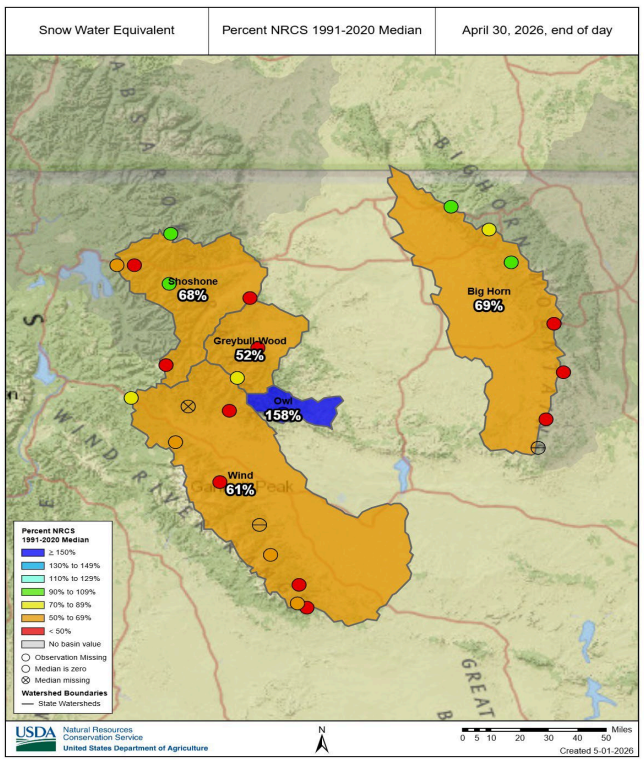


SNOWPACK SUMMARY

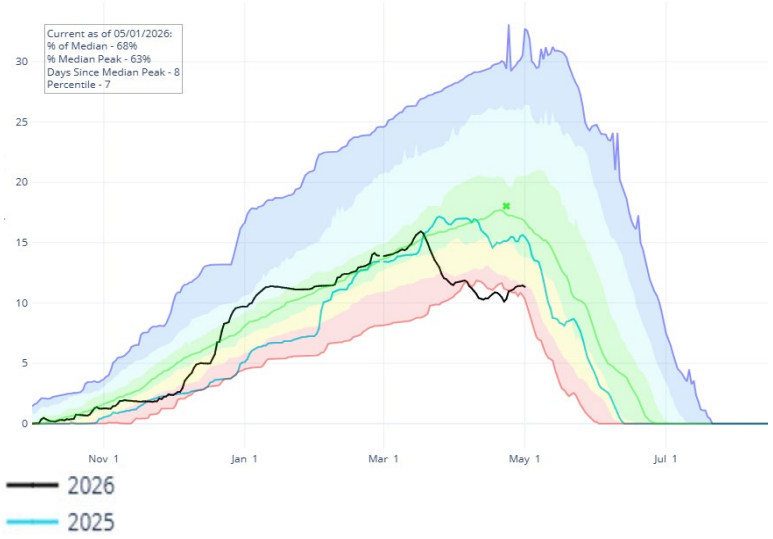
The snow water equivalent (SWE) graphs are a composite of SNOTEL sites within the Bighorn River Basin managed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Wind River

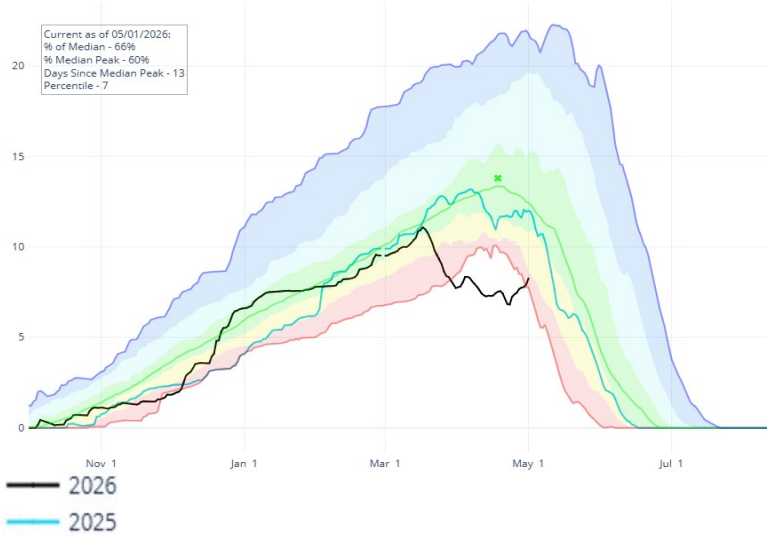




Shoshone River

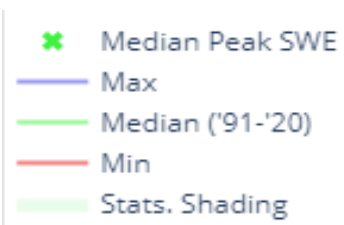


Bighorn River



NRCS Montana Snow Survey Website: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/mt/snow/

Statistical shading breaks at 10th, 30th,50th, 70th, and 90th Percentiles
Normal ('91-'20) – Official median calculated from 1991-2020 data
Normal (POR) – Unofficial mean calculated from Period of Record data

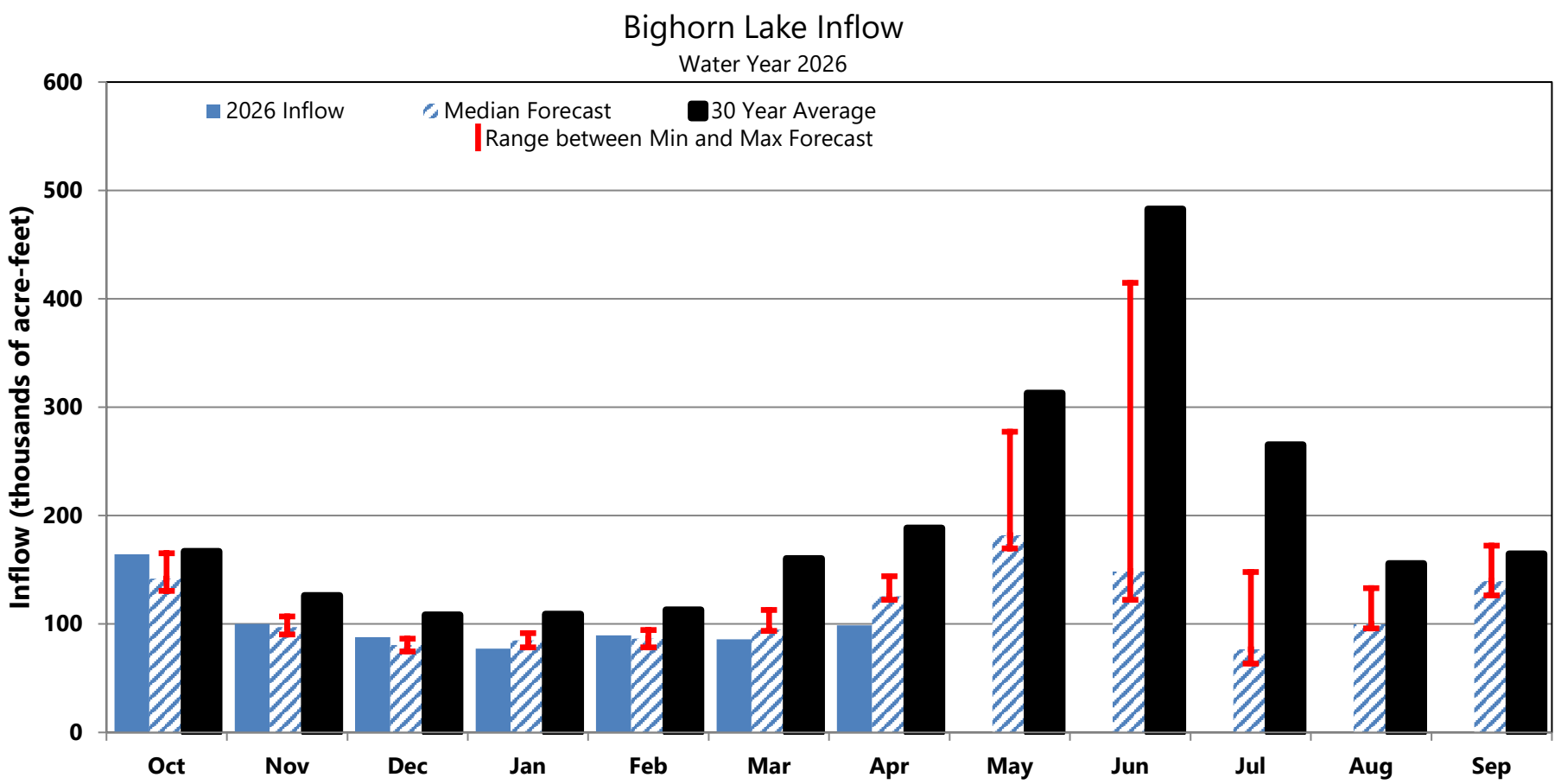


FORECAST SUMMARY

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 April inflows were less than the minimum inflow forecast. The May through July inflow forecast for May 1 is below the minimum fill volume.

April Forecast Review

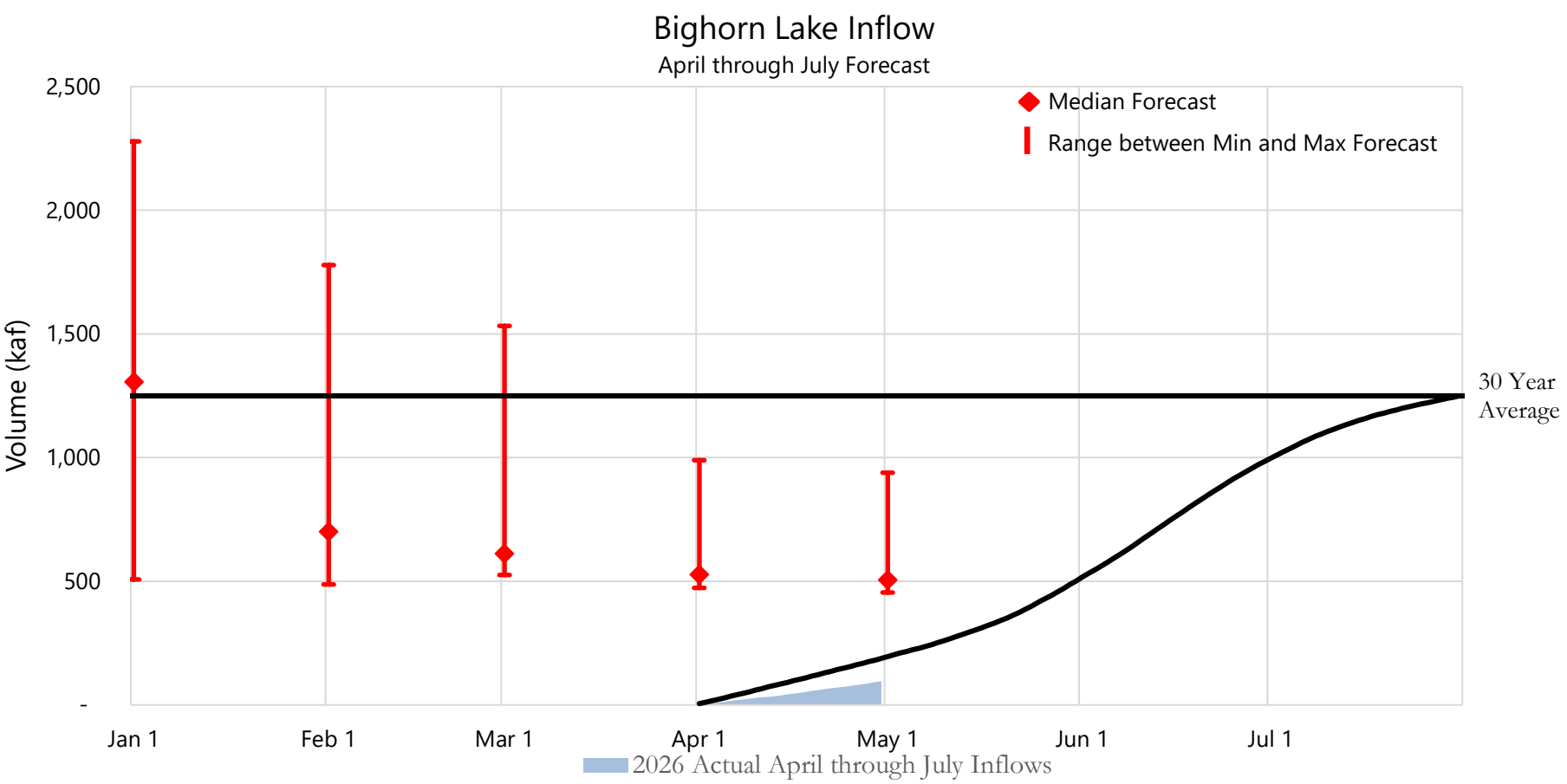
	Median Forecast (kaf)	Actual (kaf)	Difference (kaf)	Actual (% of Avg)
April Inflow	125.5	98.9	(26.6)	54



May through July Inflow Forecast for May 1

	Median Forecast (kaf)	% of Average	Minimum Forecast (kaf)	Maximum Forecast (kaf)
May through July Inflow	407	38	356	840

Actual April Inflow	99 kaf	April through July Inflow	506 kaf	Average	1,250

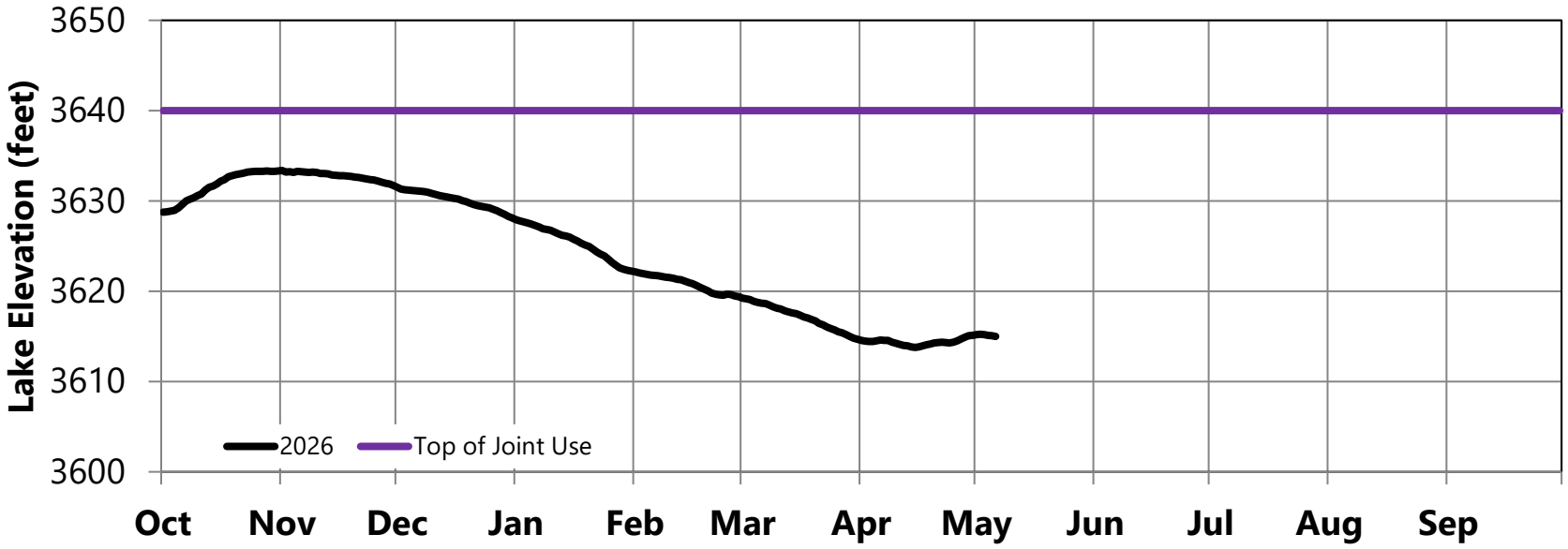


OPERATIONS REVIEW (October 1, 2025 through April 30, 2026)

Releases to the Bighorn River were decreased to 1,580 cfs during April based on forecasted inflows. The elevation of Bighorn Lake increased by 0.4 feet during April.

May 1 Storage Conditions

	Elevation feet	Storage acre-feet	Percent of Average	Percent Full
Bighorn Lake	3615.1	785,090	104	78
Buffalo Bill	5366.5	443,590	110	69
Boysen	4712.3	525,011	101	71

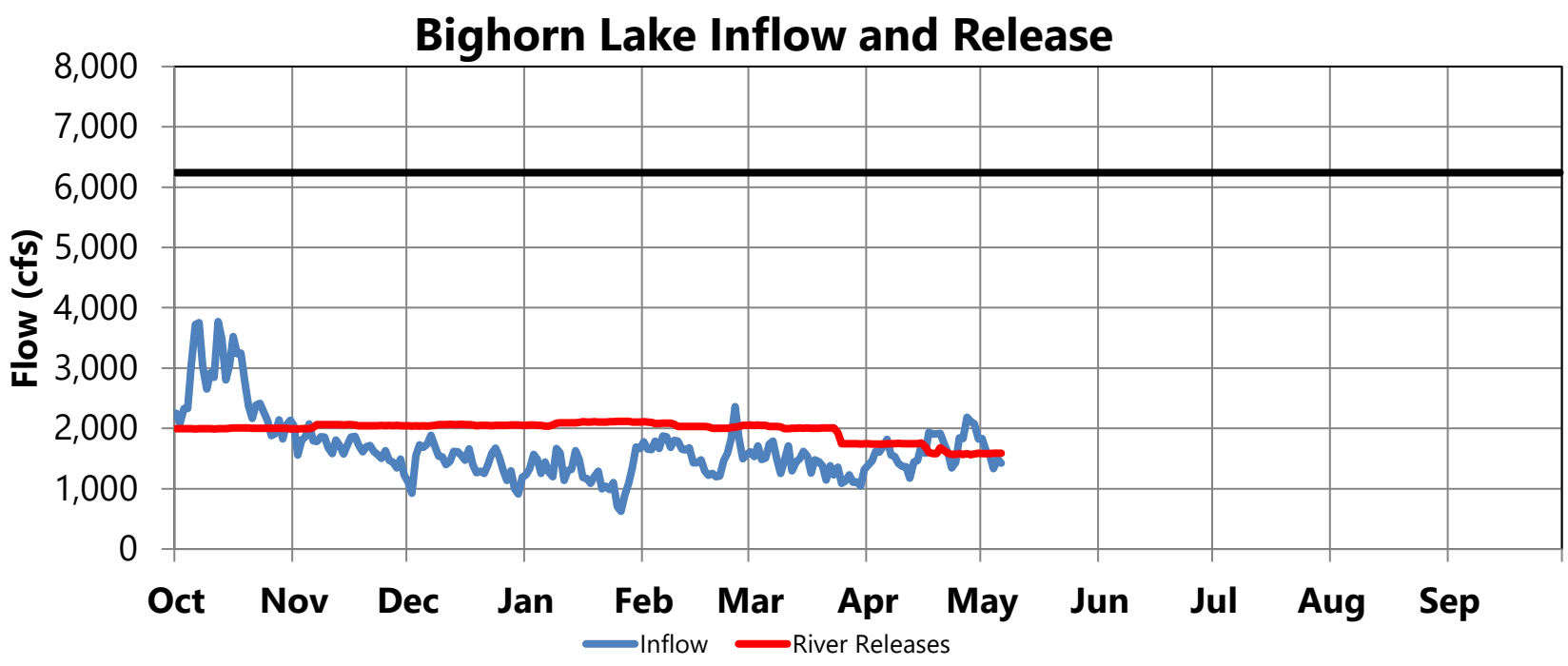


Average April Inflow

	Monthly Avg cfs	Percent of Average
Bighorn Lake	1,665	52
Buffalo Bill	1,005	126
Boysen	740	84

Average April Release

	Monthly Avg cfs	Percent of Average
Bighorn River	1,670	47
Buffalo Bill Total Release	875	71
Boysen Release	910	69



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

During May, releases to the Bighorn River will either decrease or remain at 1,580 cfs depending on actual inflow and changing hydrologic conditions in the basin. The median inflow forecast of 407 kaf is less than the minimum fill forecast for Bighorn Lake. Inflow forecasts below the minimum fill volume results in operations that target an end of March elevation of 3617 the following year while maintaining a constant release. Under these conditions the reservoir does not fill.

Median Inflow Conditions (May through July Inflow: 407 kaf)

	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Boysen Release (cfs)	1,220	1,220	1,200	1,090	1,020	800	301	299	299	301	299
Buffalo Bill Release (cfs)	1,790	1,866	1,991	1,886	1,551	644	203	203	203	203	203
Tributary Gain (cfs)	-51	-589	-1,944	-1,352	-224	726	770	464	527	668	908
Monthly Inflow (cfs)	2,959	2,497	1,246	1,624	2,347	2,170	1,274	966	1,029	1,172	1,410
Monthly Inflow (kaf)	181.9	148.6	76.6	99.9	139.6	133.4	75.8	59.4	63.3	65.1	86.7
Monthly Release (kaf)	113.7	117.8	124.8	124.8	111.9	97.2	94.0	97.2	97.2	87.7	119.8
Afterbay Release (cfs)	1,849	1,980	2,030	2,030	1,880	1,580	1,580	1,580	1,580	1,580	1,948
River Release (cfs)	1,580	1,580	1,580	1,580	1,580	1,580	1,580	1,580	1,580	1,580	1,948
End-of-Month Content (kaf)	857.6	892.5	848.7	828.0	859.9	900.5	886.4	853.0	823.4	804.6	775.9
End-of-Month Elevation (feet)	3625.5	3629.6	3624.4	3621.6	3625.8	3630.4	3628.9	3625.0	3621.0	3618.2	3613.6

Minimum Inflow Conditions (May through July Inflow: 356 kaf)

	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Boysen Release (cfs)	1,150	1,150	1,099	1,090	860	600	301	299	299	301	299
Buffalo Bill Release (cfs)	1,790	1,866	1,991	1,886	1,551	628	153	153	153	153	153
Tributary Gain (cfs)	-178	-958	-2,057	-1,416	-287	678	750	447	507	641	886
Monthly Inflow (cfs)	2,762	2,058	1,033	1,561	2,125	1,905	1,203	899	959	1,095	1,339
Monthly Inflow (kaf)	169.8	122.4	63.5	96.0	126.4	117.2	71.6	55.3	59.0	60.8	82.3
Monthly Release (kaf)	114.0	116.0	119.9	119.9	107.1	94.7	89.3	92.2	92.2	83.3	92.2
Afterbay Release (cfs)	1,855	1,950	1,950	1,950	1,800	1,540	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
River Release (cfs)	1,552	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
End-of-Month Content (kaf)	845.2	855.7	803.6	784.0	807.5	834.3	820.8	788.2	759.2	740.6	735.0
End-of-Month Elevation (feet)	3623.9	3625.3	3618.1	3614.9	3618.6	3622.5	3620.6	3615.6	3610.7	3607.3	3606.2

Maximum Inflow Conditions (May through July Inflow: 840 kaf)

	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Boysen Release (cfs)	1,200	1,333	1,464	1,090	1,020	968	800	800	800	799	1,098
Buffalo Bill Release (cfs)	2,597	4,005	2,211	2,046	1,725	988	555	353	353	353	353
Tributary Gain (cfs)	715	1,633	-1,268	-972	150	1,019	891	566	639	823	1,039
Monthly Inflow (cfs)	4,511	6,971	2,407	2,165	2,896	2,975	2,245	1,719	1,792	1,975	2,490
Monthly Inflow (kaf)	277.4	414.8	148.0	133.1	172.3	183.0	133.6	105.7	110.2	109.7	153.1
Monthly Release (kaf)	159.7	316.0	197.4	185.1	170.2	160.5	156.5	161.7	161.7	146.1	205.2
Afterbay Release (cfs)	2,598	5,310	3,210	3,010	2,860	2,610	2,630	2,630	2,630	2,630	3,337
River Release (cfs)	2,430	5,010	2,760	2,610	2,610	2,610	2,630	2,630	2,630	2,630	3,337
End-of-Month Content (kaf)	907.0	1,010.0	964.9	917.3	923.6	950.3	931.6	879.9	832.7	800.2	752.5
End-of-Month Elevation (feet)	3631.1	3639.9	3636.4	3632.1	3632.7	3635.2	3633.5	3628.2	3622.3	3617.5	3609.5

OPERATIONS OUTLOOK (May 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.

Irrigation Demands Outlook

Bighorn Canal (cfs)

	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Median Forecast	269	400	450	450	300	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minimum Forecast	303	450	450	450	300	40	0	0	0	0	0
Maximum Forecast	168	300	450	400	250	0	0	0	0	0	0

Power Generation Outlook

Current Number of Units Available: 4 of 4
Approximate Yellowtail Powerplant Turbine Capacity: 6,150 cfs
Approximate Yellowtail Powerplant Scheduled Generation Limit: 6,150 cfs

Yellowtail Powerplant Release (cfs)

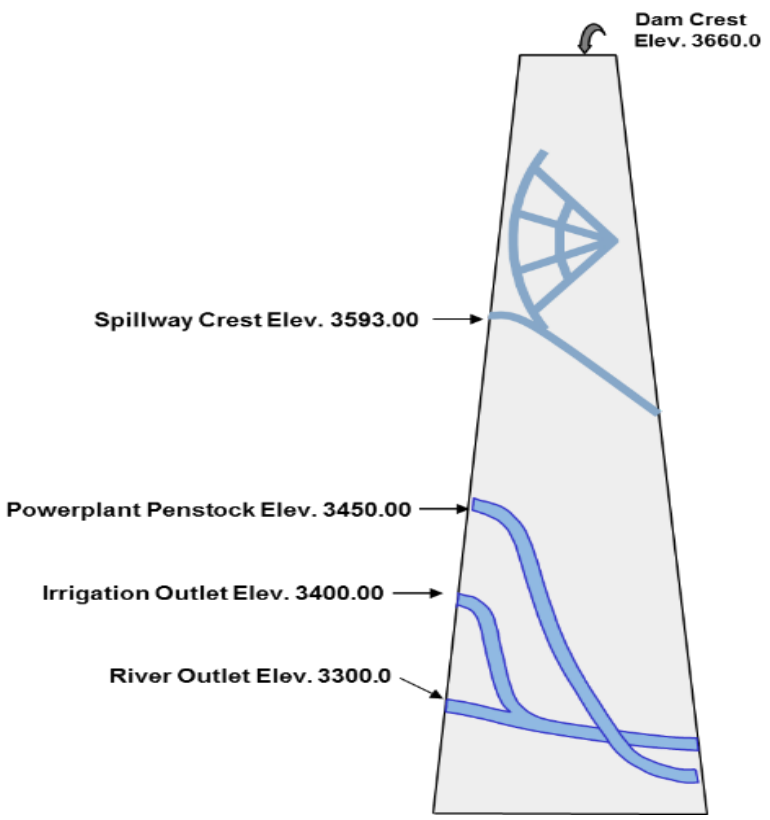
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Median Forecast	1,779	1,910	1,960	1,960	1,810	1,510	1,510	1,510	1,510	1,510	1,878
Minimum Forecast	1,785	1,880	1,880	1,880	1,730	1,470	1,430	1,430	1,430	1,430	1,430
Maximum Forecast	2,528	5,240	3,140	2,940	2,790	2,540	2,560	2,560	2,560	2,560	3,267

Yellowtail Powerplant Generation (gwh)

	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Median Forecast	40	42	44	44	39	34	33	34	34	31	42
Minimum Forecast	40	41	42	42	38	33	31	32	32	29	32
Maximum Forecast	57	114	71	66	61	57	56	58	58	52	74

Yellowtail Spill (cfs)

	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Median Forecast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minimum Forecast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Maximum Forecast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

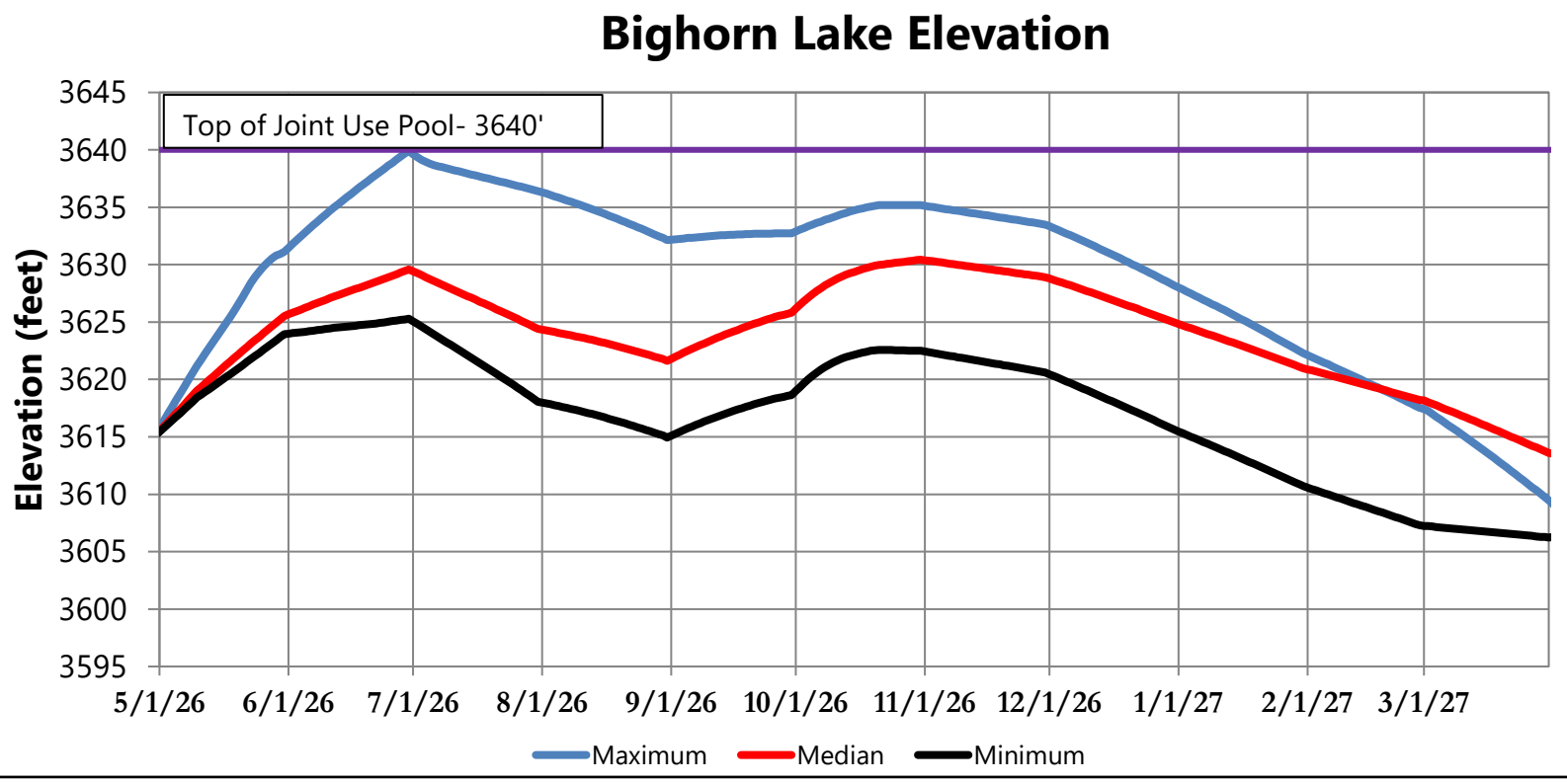


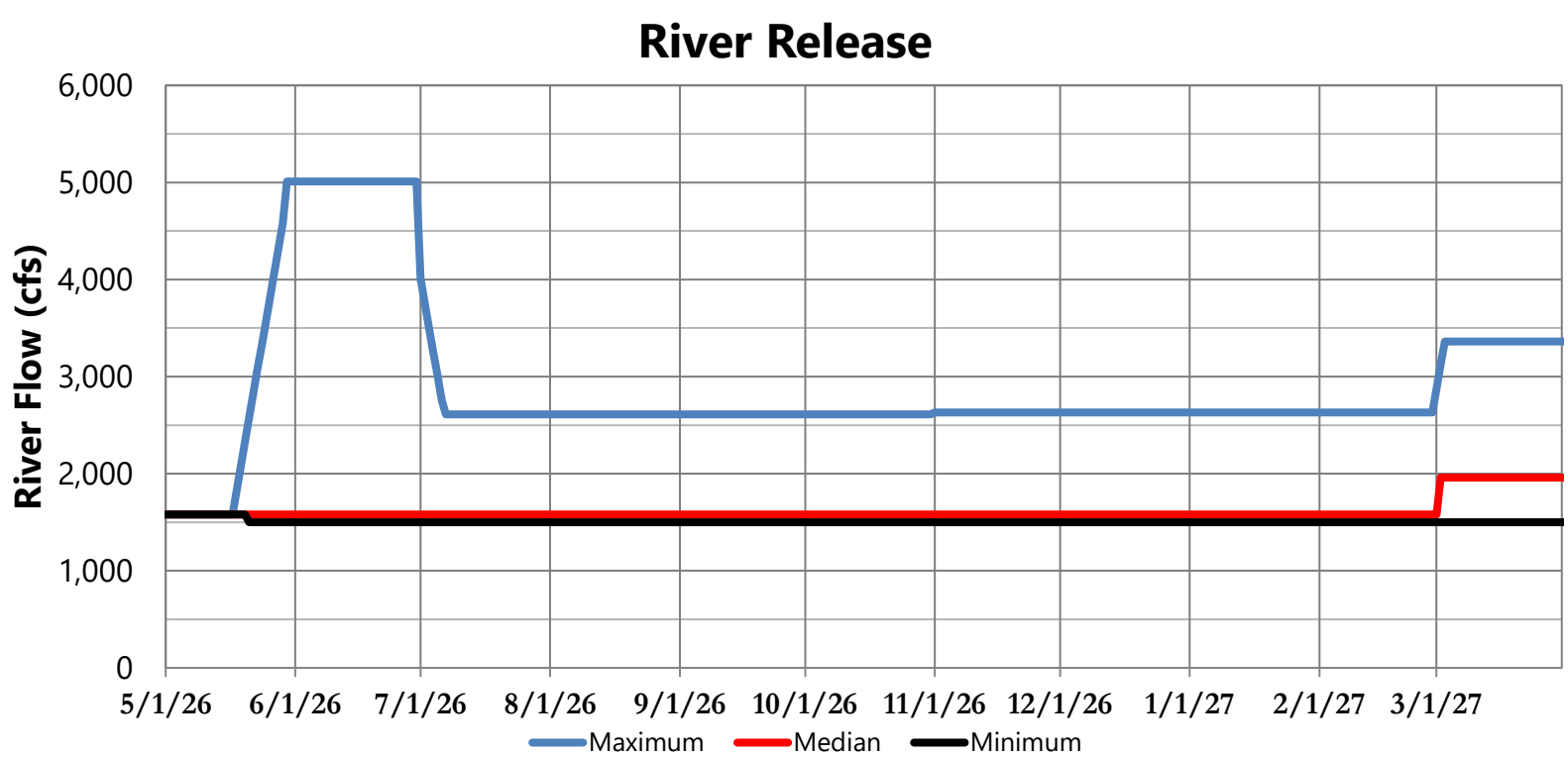
Release Outlook by Outlet

Yellowtail Powerplant bypass releases are not expected under median, minimum, or maximum plans.

OPERATIONS OUTLOOK (May 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/wareprts/main_menu.html