

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 18

INTRODUCED BY M. REGIER

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA URGING THE FAIR TREATMENT OF RECREATIONAL NEEDS AT FLATHEAD LAKE.”

WHEREAS, Flathead Lake is Montana's largest freshwater lake and the 79th largest of its type in the world, measuring 191 square miles in area, up to 370 feet deep, with 187 miles of shoreline; and

WHEREAS, fed by the Flathead and Swan Rivers, the lake is considered one of the cleanest in the world and is home to many fish species, including bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, lake trout, whitefish, and perch, and has other features, such as wetlands, riparian corridors, and floodplains; and

WHEREAS, Flathead Lake is a major destination for sailing, motorboating, waterskiing, swimming, fishing, picnicking, and camping and is enjoyed at 13 public access sites, one state park on an island, and hundreds of private and public boat docks; and

WHEREAS, although federal regulations require the lake to be brought to full pool by June 15 for summer recreation, decisions by federal agencies, dam operators, and interests outside the Flathead Lake basin have lowered the pool level, rendering it mostly unusable for thousands of citizens who live on and near it; and

WHEREAS, the ongoing renegotiation of the Columbia River Treaty presents an opportunity to improve management of the lake to optimize its use for those who live on or near it; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Columbia River System Operations planning defines operating procedures for each dam in the Columbia River system, including the Hungry Horse and Seli's Ksanka Qlispe' dams, to manage pool levels for floods, fish passage and spawning, recreation, water quality, and power generation; and

WHEREAS, the Technical Management Team for the Columbia River Basin, composed of representatives from five federal agencies, eight Indian tribes, and four states, including Montana, has made decisions in recent years counter to the recreational interests of Flathead Lake users.

1 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF
2 THE STATE OF MONTANA:

3 That the 69th Montana Legislature requests:

4 (1) all decision-making bodies with an influence on the usability of Flathead Lake ensure that
5 recreation needs be measured fairly compared to hydropower, fish, and irrigation demands; and

6 (2) that Flathead Lake recreation needs be expressly reflected in the next iteration of the Columbia
7 River Treaty and in the next round of the Columbia River System Operations planning.

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of State send a copy of this resolution to the U.S.
9 Army Corps of Engineers for distribution to the Technical Management Team for the Columbia River Basin, and
10 to the United States and Canadian entities for distribution to those negotiating the Columbia River Treaty,
11 including the Bonneville Power Administration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the British Columbia
12 Hydro and Power Authority, and to each federally recognized tribal government in Montana.

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