

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 9

INTRODUCED BY NELSON, MUSGROVE, BALES, BERGREN, BUTCHER, P. CLARK, FRANKLIN, GALVIN-HALCRO, HANSEN, HEDGES, KEANE, KITZENBERG, LENHART, MCCARTHY, MCNUTT, NEWMAN, PATTISON, D. RYAN, SHEA, SMITH, TESTER, WAITSCHIES, WILSON, WITT, WINDY BOY

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA URGING THE MEMBERS OF THE MONTANA CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO INTRODUCE AND SUPPORT LEGISLATION IN THE U.S. CONGRESS TO ESTABLISH A MINIMUM LAKE LEVEL IN FORT PECK RESERVOIR.

WHEREAS, the sport fishery in Fort Peck Reservoir is of vital importance to the economy of northeast Montana and northwest North Dakota; and

WHEREAS, the State of Montana and the federal government have spent about \$3 million to date on a warm water hatchery at Fort Peck to improve the warm water fishery in Fort Peck Reservoir and other state waters, and private donors have contributed an additional \$200,000 toward the hatchery project; and

WHEREAS, pool elevations that are below 2,225 feet above mean sea level eliminate significant amounts of spawning and rearing habitat, thereby reducing fish numbers and greatly impairing recreational access to the reservoir, the combination of which is very detrimental to the local and regional economy; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' policy regarding lake levels in Fort Peck Reservoir is devastating to fisheries above and below Fort Peck Dam and to the area economy; and

WHEREAS, a higher pool level and a more conservative approach to operating Fort Peck Reservoir will more equitably spread the effects of prolonged drought and allow for healthier river flows below Fort Peck Dam during drought; and

WHEREAS, seven of the eight states represented on the Missouri River Basin Association have consistently supported a higher level of water conservation during periods of drought.

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

That the members of the Montana Congressional Delegation be urged to introduce legislation in the U.S. Congress as promptly as possible to set a minimum lake level of 2,225 feet above mean sea level in Fort Peck Reservoir, except when necessary to protect fish and wildlife and their habitat in the river reach between Fort

Peck Dam and Lake Sakakawea, and to use the Delegation's combined efforts in support of the legislation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of State send copies of this resolution to the members of the Montana Congressional Delegation.

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