

**Montana Department
of
Fish, Wildlife & Parks**



P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
April 1, 1996

Dear NIFPA Participant:

RE: Yellowstone Concerto

You were one of several persons interested in receiving a copy of this video. Enclosed is one copy, compliments of our Department. We hope it will be useful to you in establishing, or improving, your instream flow public involvement program.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at the above address or at (405) 444-3888.

Sincerely,

Liter Spence
Water Resources Supervisor
Fisheries Division

THE YELLOWSTONE CONCERTO

This video was first produced as a 16mm film in 1977 by the Montana Fish and Game Department to promote the values of the Yellowstone River as a free-flowing river requiring adequate instream flows. It is an example of Public Involvement.

The F&G Department had submitted an application for instream flow reservations in the Yellowstone River basin to the Montana Board of Natural Resources and Conservation, a politically appointed lay board, that would make the decision whether or not to grant the requests. The application was detailed and technical but the decision would ultimately be political.

F&G recognized early on that public support would be required for the flows to be granted because it had requested a substantial amount of water for instream flows for fish, wildlife and recreation. If the public clung to the traditional attitude that rivers were for diversion and consumption, the application would be in trouble. However, if Montanans could be convinced that flowing water and fish and wildlife had value, the application would have a chance.

F&G had the ability and personnel to put a great effort into the project, including a film production unit and regional information officers across the state. Everyone was mobilized.

Production of THE YELLOWSTONE CONCERTO began in 1976. On February 1, 1977, F&G held a first-ever news conference where statements were made by the Department and its Fish and Game Commission in support of the instream flow reservations. The film was released along with a special issue of MONTANA OUTDOORS, the Department's colorful magazine, which was devoted entirely to the Yellowstone.

The film and magazine were emotional appeals to preserve the free-flowing Yellowstone and to point out that instream flow reservations were important in its preservation. The subsequent public information and media efforts actually helped change the tone of the entire debate. The Yellowstone River began evolving as "untouchable". It was no longer a question of whether the river should be preserved, it was a question of whether the instream flow reservations were the best means to preserve it.

However, following eight weeks of public hearings and nearly a year's debate by the Board, F&G was granted instream flows on 586 miles of the Yellowstone River and on 65 of its tributaries. This success has to be attributed to the publicity surrounding the film and magazine as well as the factual, technical testimony at the hearings.

In the end, the rights of the longest free-flowing river in the lower 48 states were preserved.

Contact: Liter Spence, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, P.O. Box 200701,
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