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Flathead Lake

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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8-12-59

STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D. MONTANA)

Flathead Lake

Mr. President, in western Montana we have what I consider to be the finest and most beautiful natural fresh water lake on the North American continent, Flathead Lake.

This lake is one of the scenic wonders of the West, it abounds with recreation potential. It is a sportsman's paradise. Along its shores you will find homes and summer cottages that are comparable to those anywhere in the Nation. Flathead Lake is the heart of a fertile valley. This lake also plays an extremely important role in the generation of power and control of flood waters in the Northwest.

Periodically proposals are advanced which would alter the water level of this lake and suddenly local opposition develops with a firmness seldom found in a group of people with varied interests. This opposition is not without cause. If the level of the lake rises, it floods hundreds of homes and valuable property. If the lake is allowed to fall below a reasonable level the shoreline becomes an unsightly mud flat.

At the present time the surface level of Flathead Lake is maintained between a maximum elevation of 2893 feet and a minimum elevation of 2833 feet. This limitation is prescribed in the Federal Power Commission license for Kerr Dam.

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My distinguished senior colleague, Senator James E. Murray, and I have introduced today legislation which would make the maintenance of these maximum and minimum water levels on the lake a Federal statute, applicable to all plans and proposals which are dependent on the use of the waters from Flathead Lake.

Flathead Lake has a tremendous role to play in the development of western Montana and this can be done without adversely effecting the water level of the lake. If not, then I shall oppose vigorously any plan to tamper with one of Montana's greatest natural resources.