

# BuRec schedules flushing flow on Big Horn

**By Jeanette Johnson**

*Staff Writer*

THERMOPOLIS — The Bureau of Reclamation (BuRec), at the request of and in collaboration with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGF), has scheduled a flushing flow in the Big Horn River downstream of Boysen Dam.

Beginning at 2 a.m. on Tuesday, March 30, the release of water from Boysen Dam will be increased from 700 cfs to 3000 cfs, according to the BuRec press release from Wyoming Area Manager John H. Lawson.

The flushing flow will increase to 5000 cfs around 7:15 a.m. for 10 hours before being gradually reduced back to 700 cfs at approximately noon on Wednesday, March 31, the release said.

The flushing flow has been requested for several years by the WGF, according to Wyoming Fish Biologist Jason Burckhardt.

"We haven't gotten it every year due to the low snowpack years and that kind of thing," Burckhardt said.

A study done years ago by a graduate student to determine the optimum way of mobilizing the sediments and cleaning the gravels in the Big Horn River pointed to the significance of the flushing flow, he said.

"What happens is many of the trout spawn by depositing their eggs in the gravel. By doing this flushing flow, it is removing a lot of the sediments from the gravel," he said. "So the rainbows can deposit their eggs in the gravel."

Without the flushing flow, the sediment in the gravels actually coats and suffocates the eggs, he explained.

While the increase is taking place, people are cautioned to be careful in the area, he said.

"It may negatively affect the fishing for the short duration," he said.

"But the fishing tends to pick up immediately afterward because it does dislodge some of the invertebrates, some of the bugs."

The flushing flow is generally welcomed by anglers because it provides easier wading conditions, according to the release.

There is also a reduction in floating algae.

In February the flows were reduced from 800 cubic feet per second (cfs) to 700 cfs to conserve water to provide a flushing flow in late March, according to Lawson.

"There is not going to be as big a spike as you go further down stream," he said.

The purpose of the flushing flow is to improve trout reproduction by flushing fine sediments from spawning gravels in the river, according to the release. This action also improves insect production in the stream by opening up interstitial spaces between gravels and cobbles.