

## Lake full, river up

*By Angus M. Thuermer Jr., Jackson Hole, Wyo.  
June 25, 2009*

Jackson Lake reservoir has filled beyond its normal capacity and the Bureau of Reclamation is releasing more water from Jackson Lake Dam to keep the lake water level in check.

On Wednesday, the reservoir was at 101 percent of capacity, holding 855,700 acre feet of water, 8,700 acre feet more than the normal capacity of 847,000.

At the Bureau of Reclamation office in Burley, Idaho, hydraulic engineer Art Hill said his agency would not let the reservoir fill more than a half foot into its "surcharge" area.

To prevent that, the bureau increased releases from Jackson Lake Dam twice Tuesday, releasing an additional 500 cubic feet a second each time. On Wednesday, outflow measured 5,520 cfs, up from 2,800 cfs Sunday.

"This might be one day, two days," Hill said of the boost in releases. "I'm hoping in the next couple of days we'll be dropping down."

The fresh rush of water into the Snake River boosted flows in the Snake River Canyon to 17,100 cfs Wednesday after-noon.

They had been hovering around 15,000 cfs several days earlier.

The bureau's Upper Snake River water storage is essentially full, with Palisades Reservoir at 100 percent and American Falls Reservoir at 101 percent. Even though there is nowhere to store more runoff and mountain ranges are holding significant snowpack, Hill said he held little worry about flooding.

He said residents shouldn't worry about any sudden surges "unless we get another storm somewhere."

That's because the peak of snow runoff appears to have passed, Hill said.

He pointed to the river gauge above Jackson Lake at Flagg Ranch as a key indicator. Flows there dropped from 6,000 cfs Sunday to about half that Wednesday, representing a decline in natural flows that was mimicked by the Gros Ventre River and Buffalo Fork.

"Flagg Ranch is dropping pretty hard," Hill said.

Regarding the level of Jackson Lake, "we're not going to go over 0.5" feet above the normal maximum storage level, he said.

River flows around Jackson Hole saw their seasonal peak at the end of May.