

MEMORANDUM

TO: UGRWCD Board Members
FROM: Taylor Local Users Group
DATE: August 19, 2020
SUBJECT: Taylor Local Users Group Meeting Minutes

A TLUG meeting was held on August 19, 2020 via teleconference. Attending the meeting were the following TLUG members:

Andy Spann, representative for irrigation users
Pete Dunda, representative for property owners
Ernie Cockrell, representative for Taylor Placer
Mark Schumacher, representative for whitewater recreation interests
Ryan Birdsey, representative for flat water recreational interests
Don Sabrowski, UGRWCD Board Member, TLUG Chair

Also present: Erik Knight (BOR); Ryan Christianson (BOR); Dustin Brown (Scenic River Tours); Sonja Chavez and Beverly Richards (UGRWCD).

Don Sabrowski (Chair) called the meeting to order.

The meeting summary from August 6, 2020 was included with the meeting information. Don Sabrowski asked if there were any changes or comments on the summary. Ernie Cockrell said we should include which flows were discussed when referencing them on page 2, paragraph 5. The sentence should now read... *200 cfs of flows in the Taylor River*. The meeting summary was approved as amended.

Erik Knight said the USGS performed stream measurements on the Taylor River and as a result adjusted down the stream flows amounts that are used to determine the releases for a period of approximately six weeks. When we thought we were releasing 300 cfs it was actually 290 cfs; 275 cfs released were actually 260; and currently the 250 cfs releases are actually 235 cfs. As a result, the computed runoff for April through July of 62,000 acre-feet was reduced to 61,000 acre-feet. This is an even greater departure from the original forecast of 69,000 acre-feet as the official number is now 61,300 acre-feet for April through July runoff. They have also lowered the forecasted inflow volume from 6,000 acre-feet to 4,500 acre feet for August. The forecast for September remains the same.

For the operations plan, Erik updated the new inflow and outflow numbers but did not make any changes to the release pattern. These adjustments have resulted in an end of season storage. The plan still shows the release amount of 250 cfs for August and the first part September. If we were to maintain the current release amount of 235 cfs for that time period, the end of year content would be 67,300 acre feet which is 1,000 acre feet higher than the previous amount of 66,300 acre feet.

Mark Schumacher asked if the flows were even lower than 235 cfs as many of his guides were having trouble floating through that area. Erik said the measurements were done earlier in the week and this was when they officially adjusted the flow rate down to 230 cfs. Mark said his guides have to have lighter loads particularly when the flows are below 250 cfs.

At this time the Chair asked for comments from the TLUG users. Ernie Cockrell said that based on the proposed operations plan, we will be 1,700 acre feet short of the target of 69,000 acre feet and we are somewhat limited in what we can do going forward. His suggestion was to lower the flows to 200 cfs immediately for 12 days which would gain 755 acre feet and drop release to 150 beginning on September 1 for 15 days which would result in 2,784 acre feet for a total gain in end of year content of 3,542 acre feet. This would provide us with a cushion of about 700 to 800 acre feet though we would still be just below the target. This could be addressed by dropping the flows to 100 cfs for as long as necessary.

Don Sabrowski asked Mark what signifies the end of the season for his business. This year the end of the season is likely to be the Labor Day weekend but may occur earlier. He suggested we keep the 235 cfs flows through the end of August and then could drop to 200 or 150 cfs at the beginning of September. Erik said in order to meet the 1,700 acre foot shortfall all that would be required is to drop releases by 50 cfs for 15 days. Erik calculated the suggested releases of 235 cfs through August 31 and 150 cfs through Labor Day weekend and this results in 69,500 acre feet of storage for the end of the year.

Ernie said he had suggested making reductions in the past several operations plans starting in May through July in order to bank more water for the end of the season. Making these corrections now is more difficult. Erik said those operations plans were based upon the June 1 forecast which was 8,000 acre feet different than what actually occurred. Ernie said this is the point of working towards a target particularly in a dry year and that is the reason for the stipulation. Upper Gunnison benefitted from the stipulation in the 2nd fill right, but in dry years low flow rates have a detrimental affect on the river. He said the rule of thumb for dry years should be that what is done early will pay off later.

Mark said he agrees that we could conserve early in the year even though we are hitting the target of 69,000 acre feet. In dry years it is more important to adjust later in the year. Adjustments should be made based on the target storage amounts rather than based on the forecast.

Erik Knight said the reservoir is also operated for water users downstream. When the releases are lowered, they have trouble making use of the water in the system and these are based on the forecast. Saving water for next year is often at the expense of this year's uses. Ernie said the release rate is important for stream health and that is why he made suggestions in reductions back in July.

Sonja Chavez clarified the suggested changes. These include keeping the current release rate of 235 cfs through the end of August. Dan Brauch has indicated in previous conversation that adequate flows for the fishery are generally most important when temperatures get high in July and August. Also, changes include keeping the rate at 150 on the first of September. Erik adjusted the first week in September to 200 cfs which results in an end of year storage of 68,900 acre feet.

Mark Schumacher said at 200 cfs rafting comes to halt. Flows at 235 cfs will keep the season going until the end of August. It was suggested to see what the September 1 forecast shows and meet again to discuss further changes. Ryan Birdsey said that at the Taylor Marina they are more flexible with changes to the operations plan. They are currently seeing one foot of bank line a day. They can still launch from the ramp but may have to make changes as the year progresses. He said there is a lot more use of the lake this year but that should drop after Labor Day. There are major concerns for downstream users so he thinks we should stay on the more conservative side.

Don asked, "If the end of year storage target is not met, will this impact the winter flows?" Erik said that based on the stipulation, we can recommend winter flows at 84 cfs even if we do not meet the 69,000 acre feet storage target. Ernie said he would like assurances from the bureau that this is the case, keep the winter flows at 84 cfs and do what we can to hit the 69,000 acre-foot target.

Andy said he agrees with Ernie. He does not think we will see an increase in inflows unless we see a large amount of rain. He also agrees with making the suggested adjustments of 235 cfs through the end of August and 150 cfs beginning the first of September but he would like to get the plan nailed down now rather than waiting for the next forecast.

It was the consensus of the group to recommend to the Four Parties that we keep the current 235 cfs release through the end of August, drop to 150 cfs beginning on September 1, and maintain a proposed winter flow release of 84 cfs.

There was also discussion around installation of stream gages above the reservoir on un-gaged tributaries so that we are not entirely dependent upon the bi-monthly model forecasts. More research on cost and locations will be done by District staff. Sonja also reminded the TLUG that the Upper Gunnison District is evaluating the benefits of a Doppler radar system which could aid in developing improved data on snowfall and therefore snowpack throughout the basin and thus improve our forecasting models.

Erik Knight will provide an update with the proposed flows. No meeting is currently scheduled for the TLUG group; however, this will be reevaluated based upon the September 1 forecast. Erik will provide this forecast as soon as it is available.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:58 p.m.