



*Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District*

MEMORANDUM

**TO:** UGRWCD Board Members  
**FROM:** Taylor Local Users Group (TLUG)  
**DATE:** April 8, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** Taylor Local Users Group Meeting Minutes

A TLUG meeting was held on April 8, 2020 via Zoom video/teleconference. Attending the meeting were the following TLUG members:

Ryan Birdsey, representative for flat water recreation interests  
Ernie Cockrell, representative for Taylor Placer  
Pete Dunda, representative for property owners  
Roark Kiklevich, representative for wade fishing interests  
Don Sabrowski, UGRWCD Board representative and TLUG Chair  
Mark Schumacher, representative for whitewater recreation interests  
Andy Spann, representative for irrigation interests

Also present: Rory Birdsey (Taylor Park Marina); Dan Brauch (CO Parks & Wildlife); Dustin Brown (Scenic River Tours); Ryan Christianson (BOR); Tom Fowlds (BOR); David Gochis (National Center for Atmospheric Research-NCAR); Erik Knight (BOR); Jesse Kruthaupt (Trout Unlimited); Elliott Manning (Eleven); Michelle Pierce (UGRWCD Board President); Ches Russell (Scenic River Tours); Taylor Scott (Engineer/CO Parks & Wildlife); Ryan Unterreiner (Colorado Parks & Wildlife); Ed Warner (BOR) and Sonja Chavez, Beverly Richards, and Sue Uerling (all UGRWCD staff)

Chair Don Sabrowski called the meeting to order and asked Bev Richards to read the names of those participating via Zoom.

The meeting summary from the March 10, 2021 meeting was included in the meeting materials. There were no comments about or changes to this summary.

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Erik Knight of the Bureau of Reclamation provided an update on Taylor River Operations. According to the Colorado River Forecast Center, the Taylor Reservoir is just under 70 percent of average. They are predicting a maximum fill of 87,800 feet in elevation, short of the average 93,205 feet. Erik noted that this would leave the end of year storage content a little short of the goal of 70,000 acre feet, so flow adjustments may be needed. He reported that the snowpack is currently at 83 percent of median for 2021, similar to what we saw in 2018. Erik said the current release of 84 cfs is still in place and that they are still forecasting maximum releases of 300 cfs in June and July at present with a drop to 250 cfs in August. Chair Don Sabrowski asked if it would be possible for Erik to include a line of comparison showing 2020 releases on the Taylor Park Reservoir Operation Plan chart and Erik said this would not be a problem. Dave Gochis of the National Center for Atmospheric Research introduced himself and said that he has been gathering data on snowpack in Tincup and further above Taylor Reservoir for a few years now. He said his data is showing snowpack of 40 inches in Tincup and 55-60 inches higher, which is lower than the Snotel readings. His research is showing that streamflows will be even less than what Erik's report suggests and that peak runoff will likely be earlier than the June 9<sup>th</sup> average. Dave offered to share this data with Erik and Erik said he would appreciate having it. Chair Sabrowski asked how this data compares with the snowpack data Dave has for this time in 2020 and Dave replied that he does have over two years of comparison data and that he will share it with the TLUG group.

UGRWCD General Manager Sonja Chavez shared that she visited with Steve Anders of USGS and that Steve said they are still on track for getting the new gages installed at Texas and Willow Creek in April and continues to work with the Forest Service on permitting. No concerns.

Chair Sabrowski asked the TLUG members to provide their flow requests. There was a lot of discussion about being conservative on the front end of the season in order to save water for September and October and meet the 70,000 acre feet end of year goal.

Dan Brauch of CO Parks & Wildlife (CPW) reported that they would be doing repairs to the Spring Creek Reservoir dam outlet works which could affect flows into lower Taylor River. He introduced Taylor Scott of the CPW who will serve as the engineer for the dam rehabilitation project. Taylor reported that there are dam safety deficiencies with the outlet pipe and no ability to remotely monitor the reservoir level. Taylor reported that they will be lining the outlet pipe, replacing the operating gate stem and adding a bubbler for better remote reservoir level monitoring. This will require draining Spring Creek Reservoir over the course of the summer so that construction can begin in August and continue through mid-October. In order to meet their construction schedule, they would like to start drawing down the reservoir in mid-May, with a gradual release and then ramping up to maximum releases in June and July to drain the reservoir down to dead pool in time for construction. Chair Sabrowski asked if construction would mean breaking through the dam? Taylor replied that the dam will not need to be breached, but that access to the outlet

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pipe is required to line the pipe instead of having to demo it. Don also asked how they will handle inflows to Spring Creek Reservoir. Taylor explained that they will pump the inflow water over into the spillway during construction and will begin to gradually release through the outlet pipe in May to drain the reservoir.

Spring Creek Reservoir has approximately 1,400 acre-feet of active storage with up to 1,600 acre-feet of full storage. Taylor estimates that the current outlet pipe has a maximum capacity of 70 cfs. CPW owns the water rights for Spring Creek Reservoir. Taylor gave the following approximate schedule for the releases to reach drain down by the construction start in August:

Mid May: 20-30 cfs slow open for dam safety purposes.  
May 25ish: 65 cfs (max release)  
June: 50 – 60 cfs throughout entire month.  
July: 60 cfs beginning of the month and then dropping to 20 cfs in late July in order to be at dead pool stage by August.

Chair Sabrowski asked if there was any flexibility with these dates and Taylor said they could probably push back the releases by up to about two weeks and still meet their construction start date.

Based on this data, Chair Sabrowski asked the TLUG members if this would change their flow requests. There was a general consensus that the TLUG should still continue to start season as conservatively as possible and acknowledged that it would be very helpful if the TLUG could take advantage of the Spring Creek releases, especially in the June - July time period. The TLUG members agreed that if CPW could push back their releases by about two weeks, this could help water users during late June and early July. Taylor said this should not be a problem. Draft revised CPW releases would therefore look something like follows:

June 1: Slow open at 20-30 cfs and then ramp up to max 60 cfs.  
July: Releases will likely remain at 40-60 cfs while snowmelt is occurring.  
August: Anticipate 20-50 cfs bypass flows

Summary comments about flow requests were as follows:

Mark Schumacher – Because Three Rivers will be training raft guides at the end of May, he would like to request that for the last 10 days of May, flows be at least 200 cfs. Mark noted to raft, they really need about 200 cfs to get down the river and that this year, the raft season will probably be over by August.

Andy Spann – For irrigators, the goal would be to have the most water they can get through the early part of July for the hay crop.

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Ernie Cockrell – Since there is not going to be much water to work with and a lot of demands, he is in favor of being as conservative as possible on the front end and noted that this is a good summer for the Spring Creek project if there ever was.

Roark Kiklevich – He agrees with the discussion but believes that the group may need to look at more cuts to flows at the end of June, as he does not believe that the snowpack is as high as what the Snotel data is indicating at Park Cone.

Ryan Birdsey – He is in agreement with the consensus but also suspects that inflows will be dropping below the current model projections as runoff season progresses.

Pete Dunda – He is fine with the consensus and said an earlier ramp-up will not negatively affect homeowners' property conditions.

A roll call vote was taken, and the unanimous final recommendations were as follows:

May 1-18: 100 cfs  
May 18-20: quick ramp-up to 200 cfs  
May 20-June 1: 200 cfs  
June 1-15: 250 cfs  
June 15-early July: 300 cfs

Taylor was asked how CPW would be refilling Spring Creek Reservoir next year and he replied that they would like to fill it as soon as possible next May and June from spring runoff and that hopefully, it will be a wetter winter next year. Taylor did say that they are not planning for any releases from Spring Creek Reservoir in 2022 which is something the TLUG should remember to consider next year. CO Parks and Wildlife can be flexible on the refilling of Spring Creek in 2022 depending on the runoff situation at that time. Chair Sabrowski asked if Taylor would please keep the group posted about releases and construction and he agreed.

Chair Sabrowski asked if Sonja had talked to Uncompahgre about any possible calls that they are aware of. Sonja did speak with the UVWUA and their office manager indicated that onion growers from the Delta area were requesting water. The UVWUA started charging their canal system around May 18th and were able to do so without drawing off their Aspinall Unit storage account. She noted that it would likely be a tough year for them as well as they ended the 2020 water year with much of their service area in D4 drought and drier than average soil conditions. Sonja also reported that the District has been discussing the possible purchase of some blocks of water to delay a Gunnison Tunnel call but that the expense involved may not be justify the number of days additional water could be provided. The District will continue to analyze.

Dan Brauch of the CPW reported that they would be releasing kokanee fry on Tuesday, April 13<sup>th</sup> and they would not need extra water for the release. The fry should hit the East River on Tuesday night, which is a dark moon night and good for

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the release. He also reported that both the Taylor River and Gunnison River are still being considered for listing as “Gold Medal Waters.” He also said they are seeing a lot of boats coming in, especially from Lake Powell, with invasive species and so CPW will be ramping up their boat inspections at Blue Mesa and Taylor and doing more roving inspections up at Lake San Cristobal.

General Manager Sonja Chavez reported that the Gunnison River Festival will be held June 12 & 13, 2021. The District is the primary festival financial supporter and will be helping/volunteering at the Taylor Down River Race including a possible barbecue following the race. She encouraged TLUG members to get involved.

The consensus of the group was to meet again on **May 7<sup>th</sup> at 12 Noon** for the next TLUG Meeting.

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