



Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District

MEMORANDUM

TO: UGRWCD Board Members
FROM: Taylor Local Users Group (TLUG)
DATE: August 6, 2021
SUBJECT: Taylor Local Users Group Meeting Notes

A TLUG meeting was held on Friday, August 6, 2021 in person in the UGRWCD Conference Room and via Zoom video/teleconference. Attending the meeting were the following TLUG members:

Ryan Birdsey, representative for flat water recreation interests (via Zoom)
Ernie Cockrell, representative for Taylor Placer
Pete Dunda, representative for property owners (via Zoom)
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 irrigators

Also present: Steve Anders (USGS) via Zoom, John Bocchino (Riffle and Rise LLC); Dustin Brown (Scenic River Tours) via Zoom; Steve Cook (Crystal Creek HOA), Doug Forshagen (Crystal Creek HOA), Tom Fowlds (BOR) via Zoom, David Gochis (National Center for Atmospheric Research-NCAR) via Zoom; Erik Knight (BOR) via Zoom; Elliot Manning (Eleven Guides & Outfitters) via Zoom, Ches Russell (Scenic River Tours) via Zoom; and Sonja Chavez, Jill Steele and Sue Uerling (all UGRWCD staff)

Chair Don Sabrowski called the meeting to order at 9 am. Don asked if there were any comments or changes to the July 7, 2021 Meeting Summary. Mark Schumacher commented that he was the one who made the motion regarding the final release recommendations. Ernie Cockrell commented that he had made a previous motion about the release schedule and that may have caused some confusion for the summary. The change was made to the July 7, 2021 Meeting Summary.

210806 TLUG Meeting Summary

Erik Knight of the Bureau of Reclamation provided an update on Taylor River Operations. Erik noted that the Colorado River Forecast Center is now predicting a year-end level of 57,500 acre-feet for Taylor Reservoir, which is a 2,900 acre-foot improvement over the previous forecast. This would leave the reservoir at 58% of full for 2021 year-end, which falls in the “very dry” category. Erik said that July monsoon rains were at 140 percent of average and this really helped. Erik pointed out that the “Annual Operating Plan Summary,” included in the meeting packet, now includes predicted levels for 2022 using average snowpack/precipitation totals. He pointed out that with average snowpack, the reservoir could fill to 102,500 acre-feet by June of 2022.

Chair Don Sabrowski asked Erik if the actual releases this summer have been verified and are accurate. Erik replied that he was not sure when the USGS had been to the Taylor Reservoir to be verified, but he believed that their representative, Katie, had been up very recently. He did confirm that a representative visited the reservoir on March 18th, May 20th, May 21 and June 24, so any discrepancies would have been noted during those visits. Chair Sabrowski asked if Erik could please confirm that information with the TLUG representatives and he agreed.

David Gochis shared his screen showing NCAR’s summary forecast for the basin. Dave reported that their records showed total inflows from the Taylor River at 38,000 acre-feet. He reported that the other rivers and streams that they measure in the basin either held pretty steady since the last meeting or had a slight uptick thanks to recent monsoonal rains. Their measurements were as follows:

East River – 101,600 acre-feet
Coal Creek – 82,000 acre-feet
Slate River – 50,700 acre-feet
Ohio Creek at Baldwin – 26,200 acre-feet
Tomichi Creek – 33,900 acre-feet

Dave noted that having the data from the new Texas and Willow Creek gages will be a nice asset for the Taylor Model.

Steve Anders of the USGS reviewed some of the data they are receiving from the new gages at Texas and Willow Creek. He showed the group the USGS website data links that could be used to access the information. Steve noted that the initial data output shown on these links is very provisional as they will have several more tests to conduct to verify that they are working correctly. In addition, Steve said that they would need to do regular checks to be certain that people are not putting boulders in the creeks for crossing and that beaver dams are not affecting the flows. Steve noted that the data provided in the link now reads in real time which should be a good benefit for the fishing guides. The links are as follows:

https://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/uv?site_no=09114500
https://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/uv?site_no=09119000

<https://dashboard.waterdata.usgs.gov/app/nwd/?aoi=default>

https://waterwatch.usgs.gov/index.php?id=flood&sid=w_table&r=co

Chair Don Sabrowski asked if the USGS has any historical data on both sites from the past when there were gages on Texas and Willow Creek. Steve replied that they do have records from 1929-34 for Texas Creek and 1987-1992 for Willow Creek but he cautioned against making comparisons of the data from the current readings as the data was collected and reported differently in the past, therefore you would want to be careful about how you interpret it.

Chairman Don Sabrowski asked the TLUG representatives for their input on releases going forward. There was a lot of discussion around keeping releases at a level where rafting could continue through Labor Day; being more conservative on releases to try to meet the stipulation end of water year storage content of 60,000 acre-feet (end of October); appropriate releases during the hotter month of August and through the winter with respect to minimizing adverse effects on the fishery; and any further water needs this year for agricultural users. After much discussion about recreational needs through September 6th (Labor Day), agricultural needs through August, protection of the fishery through August and not wanting winter releases to fall below a currently targeted 75 cfs a final motion for operational releases was made with a commitment to revisit winter flow at the next meeting.

The motion was as follows:

240 cfs* - August 7 through September 6, 2021 (Labor Day Holiday)

135 cfs* - September 7 through 30, 2021

*subject to change based on current conditions.

A roll call vote of the TLUG representatives was held and the motion passed six votes to zero votes with Pete Dunda, representative for the property owners, having left the Zoom meeting prior to the vote.

UGRWCD Manager Sonja Chavez addressed emergency releases from Blue Mesa Reservoir to help try to keep Lake Powell levels above critical thresholds for generating hydropower. There were questions about whether there would be any attempt to “shepherd” the releases from Blue Mesa, Flaming Gorge and Navajo Reservoirs to be certain the water arrives in full at Lake Powell as planned. Erik Knight explained that the BOR has no obligation to shepherd the water, nor can they ensure that irrigators and other users downstream from the release points might take some of the water being released. Erik does believe that there will be an effort to measure the amount of water making it to the state line. Erik assured the meeting participants that Taylor Reservoir will in no way be affected by Blue Mesa releases as any further emergency releases can only come from federal Colorado River Storage

210806 TLUG Meeting Summary

Project Reservoirs. He also said that Taylor Park Reservoir cannot be used to help refill Blue Mesa Reservoir as Taylor Reservoir is senior to Blue Mesa.

Chair Don Sabrowski asked if there were any citizens comments. Doug Forshagen spoke on behalf of the Crystal Creek HOA and thanked the TLUG representatives for their efforts in managing the reservoir. John Bocchino of Riffle and Rise expressed concerns for the fishery if winter flows are less than 75 cfs and recommended having Kevin Alexander from Western Colorado University speak to the group about possible effects on the fishery and macroinvertebrates. General Manager Sonja Chavez offered to check with Kevin on his availability to give a brief presentation at the next meeting.

The next TLUG meeting was scheduled for September 2nd at 4 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:38 a.m.