



*Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District*

MEMORANDUM

**TO:** UGRWCD Board Members  
**FROM:** Taylor Local Users Group (TLUG)  
**DATE:** September 2, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** Taylor Local Users Group Meeting Notes

A TLUG meeting was held on Thursday, September 2 at 4 p.m. 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  
Don Sabrowski, UGRWCD Board representative and TLUG Chair

Also present: John Bocchino (Riffle and Rise LLC); Dan Brauch, (CPW); Dustin Brown (Scenic River Tours); Steve Cook (Crystal Creek HOA), Ryan Christensen (BOR); Doug Forshagen (Crystal Creek HOA); Erik Knight (BOR); Ches Russell (Scenic River Tours) via Zoom; Brock Sampson (Harmel's); and Sonja Chavez, Jill Steele and Sue Uerling (all UGRWCD staff)

Chair Don Sabrowski called the meeting to order at 4 PM. Don asked if there were any comments or changes to the August 6, 2021 Meeting Summary. Ernie Cockrell noted that under the meeting attendees listing, it should say "Doug" Forshagen not "Dave." This correction was made to the August 6, 2021 Meeting Summary.

Erik Knight of the Bureau of Reclamation provided an update on Taylor River Operations. Erik noted that the Colorado Basin River Forecast Center is now predicting an October 31st storage of 59,700 acre-feet for Taylor Reservoir, which is just 300 acre-feet shy of the 60,000 acre-feet goal for a dry year and nearly a 2,000 acre-foot improvement over the previous forecast. This would leave the reservoir at 58% of full for 2021 year-end. Erik said inflows in August totaled 6,900 acre-feet and that monsoonal rainfall for the area was 170 percent of average. Erik noted that if the releases were kept as requested at the last meeting: 240 cfs through September

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6; 135 cfs through September 30<sup>th</sup> and then 75 cfs through winter, this would result in a year-end elevation of 59,700 acre-feet, which is just 300 acre-feet below the 60,000 acre-feet target of the stipulation.

David Gochis was not able to attend the meeting, but did share via email that he had some good news regarding the Cottonwood Snolite station as follows: “our system integration tests with the NRCS continue to go well and we are looking to set the installation date for the tower within the next few weeks.”

Chairman Don Sabrowski asked the TLUG representatives for their input on releases going forward. Ernie Cockrell said that with the flows recommended they would be “cutting it really close” to not meeting the year-end target of 60,000 acre-feet identified by the stipulation (Note: The stipulation states that “In any year when the June 1 Forecasted Inflow is less than 60,000 acre-feet, the Minimum Storage Objective shall be finally determined based upon actual April through July inflow; provided, however, that releases from the Reservoir shall be managed in order to avoid, if possible, an October 31 Reservoir content less than 60,000 acre-feet.” The minimum storage object based upon the forecasted April to July inflow is 58,000 acre-feet). He asked if there should be any modifications to the request to try to meet or exceed 60,000 acre-feet. After some discussion, there was a consensus that the flows could be revisited again if needed after the BOR sends their mid-month report. There was a lot of discussion around keeping releases through September 6 as previously agreed at the last meeting, especially since the recreational users were told they could count on those releases through Labor Day. Dan Brauch CPW Fishery Biologist reported that there were no known negative repercussions for the fishery with winter flows of 75 cfs.

Chairman Don Sabrowski asked for a motion to keep the flows at: **240 cfs\*** through September 6, 2021; **135 cfs\*** September 7 through 30, 2021, then switching to winter flows of **75 cfs\*** (*\*subject to change based on current conditions*) with the provision that the TLUG representatives could meet on September 20<sup>th</sup> to revisit the flow requests if the BOR mid-month forecast for September varied significantly from the current projections. Representative Pete Dunda agreed to make this motion and Representative Ryan Birdsey seconded the motion. It passed unanimously by all four representatives present. Erik Knight said he would get the mid-month report to General Manager Sonja Chavez for distribution as soon as it was ready. Ryan Birdsey reported that he would not be available for a September 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Under miscellaneous matters, General Manager Sonja Chavez reported that at the SWAT 4 meeting there was discussion about the releases from Blue Mesa Reservoir to shore up Lake Powell and that the elevation at Lake Powell has “stabilized” since the emergency releases commenced from the three reservoirs. Erik Knight said that there would not be another “emergency release” in the near future as the current release schedule already fulfills the conditions of an emergency release by law. Sonja also reported that Jason Ullman (DWR) indicated the data in the lower Gunnison does not show an increase in diversions since the releases began and therefore he is

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pretty confident that the water from the emergency release will at least make it to the Colorado state line, even though there has been no formal “shepherding” plan.

General Manager Sonja Chavez reported that she would be meeting with Senator John Hickenlooper tomorrow (September 3, 2021) in Gunnison and would be encouraging his support of the NWGOS efforts to install more gages in the District. She also indicated that Senators Bennett and Hickenlooper participated in the recent Colorado Water Congress Conference meeting.

Dan Brauch of the CPW reported that the Spring Creek Reservoir project to fix the dam outlet pipe was on schedule and that they now have access to the bottom of the reservoir, although the road is pretty steep. He said a new liner would be installed around the 15<sup>th</sup> of September. Dan reported that any flows from the reservoir through the end of the year would not be unlike a normal year.

General Manager Sonja Chavez reported that the Gunnison River Restoration Project commenced on August 23<sup>rd</sup> and that the cement footings were being poured. She said the project should be completed by the end of September and all landowners in the area have been notified.

During the citizen comment period, John Bocchino asked if during dry years it would be possible to plug in 100 cfs into the model as a target for winter releases and work back from that figure to come up with spring and summer flows that would meet that winter target rate of 100 cfs. His preference for the fishery would be to decrease the higher flow requests, particularly in June and July, to reserve enough water in Taylor Reservoir to meet a flow of 100 cfs in the winter. Erik Knight reported that he did not see how they would be able to do that since the forecasts can change so quickly and are based on models. General Manager Sonja Chavez also noted that the flow requests are made by consensus of all water users and that the group tries to meet all water user needs.

Brock Sampson of Harmel’s said that he is grateful for the significant efforts made by the TLUG representatives to address the flows during drought and that he appreciates being made aware of the meetings and outcomes.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:49 p.m.