



Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District

MEMORANDUM

TO: UGRWCD Board Members
FROM: Taylor Local Users Group (TLUG)
DATE: April 7, 2022
SUBJECT: Taylor Local Users Group Meeting Notes

A TLUG meeting was held on Thursday, April 7, 2022 in-person and via Zoom video/teleconference. Attending the meeting were the following TLUG members:

Ryan Birdsey, representative for flat water recreation interests
 Rory Birdsey, representative for Ernie Cockrell, 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 rafting/boating interests (via Zoom)
 Andy Spann, representative for irrigation interests

Also present: Steve Anders (USGS); John Bocchino (Rifle and Rise LLC); Dan Brauch (CO Parks and Wildlife); Dustin Brown (Scenic River Rafting); Ryan Christensen, (BOR); Steve Cook (Crystal Creek HOA), Doug Forshagen (Crystal Creek HOA); David Gochis (National Center for Atmospheric Research-NCAR); David Hayes (Hayes Poznanovic Korver Water Law LLC); Bill Hollenbeck (Taylor Park Dam Operator); Erik Knight (BOR); Steve Pope (UWVUA); Brock Sampson (Fishing Guide); Taylor Scott (CO Parks and Wildlife) Ryan Unterreiner (CO Parks and Wildlife) and Sonja Chavez, Cheryl Cwelich; Beverly Richards and Sue Uerling (all UGRWCD staff)

Chair Don Sabrowski called the meeting to order at 2 pm. Don asked Beverly Richards of the UGRWCD Staff to list the attendees both on the Zoom and in person in the Board Conference Room.

Chair Sabrowski reminded TLUG members that they are a “recommending body” only and that as chair, he is responsible for taking TLUG recommendations, which are determined by a consensus of all TLUG representatives, to the UGRWCD Board for approval. The UGRWCD Board of Directors then presents the recommendations to the Four Parties that make up the governing body of the Taylor Exchange Agreement, which are the US Bureau of Reclamation, the Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association, Colorado River Water Conservation District, and the UGRWCD.

Chairman Sabrowski then noted that participants attending the meeting from the public should provide their input regarding flow requests to the individuals representing their water user group of interest. He said they should call their appointed TLUG representative before the meeting and talk to them about their flow requests or needs and then their TLUG representatives can convey these concerns at the meeting. Chair Sabrowski noted that the public comment period will come AFTER final flow recommendations are agreed upon by a consensus of the TLUG members. If someone from the public feels they are not being heard by their representative, they can contact Don. Don did point out that he is not a voting member and is only responsible for facilitating the meetings and taking recommendations to the board.

Chairman Sabrowski then shared the position of the District regarding the minimum storage objective and recommendation of releases. Don said the District fully supports and agrees with the TLUG group’s desire to conserve water early in the season. The District is fine with the TLUG group requesting informal scenario planning worksheets for releases but wants the formal operational plans to show the minimum storage objective number for the year type stated in the amended Stipulation. The District spent a lot of time and effort in developing the year types, end of year storage objectives, winter fish flows and needs in consideration of ALL waters in the District. Don said the District would never want to be wasteful of water and if no users are requesting water as we progress through the year, then there is no reason to force a release in order to meet the minimum storage objective. If a water user makes a reasonable request for water and it is available for release, the District’s position is that the water should be put to beneficial use while also not exceeding the minimum storage objective.

Chairman Sabrowski noted that the latest revision of the meeting summary from the March 7th, 2022 TLUG meeting was emailed to TLUG members and stakeholders and asked if there were any comments or corrections. Rory Birdsey said the minutes said that he attended the meeting representing the Taylor Park Marina but that this should be his son, who goes by Rory J. Birdsey. He also asked if the UGRWCD’s position that Don just reviewed could be sent to TLUG members and stakeholders.

Erik Knight from the Bureau of Reclamation presented the April 1 forecast from the Colorado River Basin Forecast Center, which is still predicting 96,000-acre-feet maximum runoff during April through July 2022, which he noted is the same as the March 1st forecast he presented at the last TLUG Meeting. Erik said the main difference was they moved up a little bit of the runoff volume to occur earlier in the season, but noted that it still falls into an “Average Year” category.

Erik reported that the USGS had just been out to check on the gages and have adjusted them slightly, so Erik said he will need to adjust the data, but that the overall volume should only change slightly due to the gage adjustments.

Ryan Birdsey asked Erik why at the bottom of the Proposed Operations Table on October 16-31 does the acre inflow number increase when the average inflow is decreasing? Ryan asked that if this is an error, how would this affect the end of month content? Erik said this looks like a computation error and should not affect the final numbers, but he will check into this. Ryan also asked about the numbers included on the Monthly Snow Accumulation chart as his calculations are different than what is presented. Erik said that for the “monthly” data, the numbers are actually collected just through the end of the month, whereas he believes the “current season” data also includes the first several days of April, so this is likely the difference.

Mark Schumacher asked if Erik had data on when the East River typically peaks. Mark noted that if the five-day required “average year” release coincides with the East River peak, then it becomes difficult for the boat fishing and rafting community to get under the bridges. Erik said the five-days 445 cfs release required by the Stipulation must happen sometime before June 30th of this year, but that the five-day release can be moved to a different date prior to June 30th if there is a good reason for doing so. Erik will check on the East River’s peak flows and report back to the group.

David Gochis of the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) presented data from WRF Hydro and noted that the Colorado River Basin Forecast Center’s model was indicating 96,000 acre-feet of runoff while NCAR’s model was indicating 81,800 acre-feet at this time. He said NCAR’s measurement of snowpack is a little lower and that they are seeing a bit more melt-out, especially at the lower elevations. He also indicated that the soil moisture content heading into the year is on the extremely dry side and that this could be part of the difference in the two models. David and Erik agreed that their models will start to come closer to matching in May and June once they have real melt-off data to plug into the models.

Andy Spann asked David if there was a way to calculate how much water would be needed in order to get what is considered an “average” soil moisture

content for a typical year. David said he can try to run that calculation to share with the group.

Steve Anders with the USGS reported that his team had just been out to inspect the gages and that the data provided is real-time data. He noted that with the Texas Creek gage, they were able to reoccupy the site where the previous gage had been so they will be able to compare new data with the historical records from the previous gage. With the Willow Creek gage, they determined that the gage site where a previous gage had been installed back in the 1980-1990's was not an optimal site for the gage. He said the new Willow Creek gage is closer to the mouth and to the reservoir itself, which is more ideal. He said it may be likely that there will be some discharge data that will be outside the normal ranges of discharge and that these anomalies are typically due to snow and ice build-up at the gage at this time of year, which he can adjust. General Manager Sonja Chavez asked if the adjustments made at the gage below Taylor Reservoir were due to the icing issues or if there was a problem with the gage. Dave said that icing is not typically a problem at that site as the water coming out of the reservoir is warmer unless there are very cold winter conditions. He said the incorrect measurements could be due to other factors such as algae or other conditions in the channel. USGS does check these every six weeks and if measurements are off they try to correct the situation within a day if possible.

Taylor Scott, an engineer for Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), reported that the Spring Creek Reservoir outlet had been lined; they have added a new service road to the outlet; and they installed instrumentation at the dam. Taylor said that due to supply chain issues in the fall, they were not able to fully complete the project in time for a final inspection before the end of the year. He said the outlet is fully open for now and they are letting flows bypass the dam. Taylor said they hope to install the new gates by May 23 and finish the project by June 10, 2022. Taylor reported that they plan to fill the reservoir very slowly, as a dam safety measure, and would like it to get to about 80 percent full this summer. He said they will not allow runoff to spill over the dam as they have in the past.

Mark Schumacher asked when they will stock fish back in Spring Creek Reservoir. Dan Brauch of the CPW said they would like to restock as soon as possible and will keep an eye on the reservoir for when it has filled enough to safely release fish. Mark asked if they planned on releasing any brown trout and Dan replied that for now, they just plan to stock with "catchable" rainbow trout (measuring 10 inches in length) and with any fish that had been cut off upstream.

Chair Don Sabrowski expressed his concerns of trying to fill Spring Creek Reservoir now and during the summer and emphasized that Wilder has senior water rights. Taylor Scott said that the CPW can be very flexible with their

refill plans this summer and that from a dam safety point, they plan on filling the reservoir slowly, one foot every two to three days. Taylor said they will have “hold points” as the refill gets higher in the reservoir dam and they can time the releases to coordinate with TLUG’s needs. Taylor said they would be happy to cooperate with this group to make sure the water users get the water they need.

UGRWCD Staff Beverly Richards read a question from the chat box asking if Erik Knight’s and David Gochis’s reports were looking at the same period of the year. Erik and David confirmed that they are both looking at the same time frames. David noted that the bulk of the difference is based on the different figures the two groups are using in their models for snowpack levels and soil moisture content. Erik said that the Colorado River Forecast Center’s model does include some consideration for the dry soil but perhaps not as much as NCAR’s model.

Chair Don Sabrowski told Dan Brauch that the group was trying to be more conservative with ramping up flows and asked if this would be a detriment to fish. Dan said that fry emergence is in mid-June and that this is the most critical time for them but that he didn’t feel a few more weeks of low releases would cause any problems.

Rory Birdsey also asked Dan Brauch about the effect of holding back flows in April on spawning as it usually starts in about mid-April. Dan said there are specific targets they like to reach for spawning and he will look at those curves and report back. There was also discussion about how the five-day flushing flows might affect spawning. Dan said that the 445 cfs flows are a method to provide a flushing flow and might not be as effective if these are lowered. Typically, in high water years these flows are around 500-600 cfs and this ensures a better mobilization of the sediment in the stream. The consensus of the group was to try to keep the fishery flows as normal as possible and still keep releases low for the next few weeks.

At this point in the meeting, Chairman Sabrowski asked each TLUG Member for their recommendation on releases.

After Erik Knight was asked to run some projections based on several options for releases, the group eventually came to the following consensus for their recommendation to the UGRWCD Board:

Today through April 15th: leave flows at 70 cfs
April 16-30: increase to 125 cfs
May 1-15: increase to 140 cfs
May 16-31: increase to 250 cfs
June 1-15: increase to 375 (plan for five-day flushing flow of 445 cfs)
June 16-30: decrease to 350 cfs

July: keep at 350 cfs

August: decrease to 300 cfs

September: keep at 300 cfs until September 25 and then lower to 250 cfs.

October: decrease to 125 cfs.

This results in a end of October content of 70,050 cfs. Rory and Ryan Birdsey said they would both like to see the flows reduced to 250 throughout the entire month of September. This can be revisited at a later time.

Chairman Sabrowski noted that this is just a preliminary plan and the TLUG members will refine the plan in May in anticipation of recommendation to the Four Parties.

Chairman Sabrowski asked for any Citizen Comments and none were brought forth during the meeting. John Bocchino submitted a comment via email prior to the meeting and asked that it be included in the meeting summary. His email follows this summary.

Chairman Sabrowski asked Bill Hollenbeck if we could schedule a tour of the outlet works at the reservoir. He said he would be able to do that but the number should be limited to 20 people. The timing of this tour can be discussed at the next meeting.

The next meeting was set for Thursday, May 5 at 10 AM. Chairman Sabrowski adjourned the meeting at 4:18 PM.