MINUTES

Taylor Local Users Group

March 17, 2023

**TLUG Attendees:**

TLUG Representatives Present:

Roark Kiklevich (Wade Fishing)

Dirk Schumacher (Whitewater Boating; by Zoom)

Rory Birdsey (Taylor Placer)

Ryan Birdsey (Flatwater Recreation; by Zoom)

Andy Spann (Agricultural)

TLUG Representatives Absent:

Don Sabrowski (Chair)

Others in person:

Beverly Richards- UGRWCD

Sonja Chavez – UGRWCD

Bill Gallenbeck – Taylor Dam Outlet Operations

Dan Brauch – CPW

Matt Feier - GCEA

By Zoom:

Erik Knight – BOR

John Bocchino – Riffle and Rise LLC

Lindsay George – Small Hydro Consulting, LLC

Dave Gochis – UCAR

Martin Schmidt

Lee Traynham - BOR

Reece Carpenter – BOR

Steve Anders – USGS

Raquel Flinker - CRWCD

1. **Introductions & Approval of Minutes**

Following introductions Sonja Chavez provided a recap of items from 2022 end of season operations. On September 5 releases were at 230 cfs. The group agreed that on the evening of September 5 releases would be reduced by 25 cfs per day until the winter flow rate of 83 cfs was reached. The 4-parties group approved the recommendation for TLUG to allow the end of year minimum storage to go below the 70,000 acre-feet to 68,200 acre-feet. At the end of the water year, the reservoir level was at just above 68,000 acre-feet.

Sonja stated that the District was unable to fill the property owners’ seat on TLUG. The vacancy will be advertised again. There has been interest from two property owners on the Gunnison River and she has encouraged them to submit their letters of interest to the District Board.

1. **CBRFC Water Supply Update and USBR Model Forecast:** Erik Knight presented the March 1 CBRFC forecast. This forecast showed that the inflow for the time frame of April – July was forecasted to be 103,000 acre-feet which is 110% of the 30-year average. He indicated that this could change based on preliminary forecasts for March 15 where the inflow for that period could reach as high as 115,000 acre-feet due to last week’s snowstorms and he used this figure for his calculations for today.

Based on the 115,000 acre-feet figure, the year type would be classified as a Wet Year. At 115k acre-feet the reservoir could fill to the maximum capacity (or ½ foot below the dam crest). Erik indicated that BOR may recommend increasing releases earlier (end of April or May) in order to have a buffer. The max fill for the reservoir is 80,923 acre-feet at an elevation of 9,316.6 feet. The end-of-year content is forecasted to be 75,000 acre-feet with a 10-day peak flow of 445 cfs beginning (tentatively) the second week of June. These forecasted inflows are in the range of the top 10% to 25% for the period of record.

The snowpack in Taylor Park is currently at 121% of normal and could reach 200% of average with more snow forecasted in the area for next week.

1. **UCAR WRF Hydro Model Forecast:** Dave Gochis provided an update from the University of Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR). His presentation focused on providing a summary of work done in 2022. They will begin forecasting efforts for 2023 beginning in the first or second week of April. Using ASO assimilated data in 2022 resulted in a 3% variance from other forecasting. Dave also said the area is moving into an El Niño weather pattern which could result in more late spring storms.

Sonja Chavez said that the gap weather radar is currently on the trailer in Boulder and is scheduled to be installed this spring before the Sage Grouse lekking season. She has also submitted a $4M congressionally directed spending request through Senator Bennett’s office for the purchase of gap weather data in the Upper Colorado River Basin via the NOAA National Mesonet Program.

1. **Flow Recommendation Discussion Summary:**

Ryan Birdsey (Taylor Park Marina) was asked if the higher reservoir levels cause problems for marina operations. He said they could lose some parking areas and access to the boat ramp which would require they adjust operationally. They are not complaining and are just happy to see a good water year. He recommended being conservative early on to ensure the is enough storage of water for later in the season.

Andy Spann said the soil conditions are saturated this year and this will benefit runoff conditions. He also agreed that being conservative in the beginning would benefit water users later in the season.

Dirk Schumacher said he thought the operations plan was looking good including the increases planned for April and May which would benefit training efforts that occur in the second half of May.

Rory Birdsey suggested the flushing flow currently scheduled for the end of May and early June happen early, around the time of the peak flows on the East River.

Roark Kiklevich said he thinks being conservative in the beginning is the best plan, with releases being 100-120 cfs instead of 150 cfs at the beginning of April. This would allow us to hold on to more water as we get additional forecasts. He is comfortable just being cautious.

Dan Brauch said the proposed early flow releases will certainly help the rainbow trout spawning which will likely occur by mid-April through the 1st of May.  He also said they are planning a Kokanee release on April 18and will be assessing flow conditions on the Gunnison RIver (would like a minimum of 400 cfs) before asking for any supplemental flows from Taylor Park Reservoir.  The kokanee release date may change to occur as early as the ice is off of Blue Mesa Reservoir and to allow the kokanee to make their way to Blue Mesa prior to the start of larger irrigation withdrawals.

1. **Miscellaneous Updates and Next Meeting:**

**Spring Creek Reservoir:** Dan Brauch provided an update on the Spring Creek Reservoir repairs. The repair work has been completed though they have not been approved to start storing water yet. The inflow will likely exceed the outflow and they currently do not have access due to snow conditions so some storage may occur. The plan is to inspect the reservoir at multiple stages with regular site visits once the reservoir is accessible. The plan is to hold the reservoir at gauge heights; 20 feet, 30 feet and 36 feet, to inspect and assess seepage but hydrology may affect the ability to hold at these levels for the 7-day proposed period of time. They will continue to monitor water surface elevations.

No other miscellaneous updates were provided.

**Taylor Park Hydropower Project:** Matt Feier with GCEA provided a presentation and update. The presentation included plans for the design and construction. They are currently waiting for approval from the Bureau of Reclamation and are also finalizing the construction contract. The project will include a 500 KW generator which will be the largest single-phase generator in North America. This will produce 3.8M kWh and will provide power to 475 homes in the area. Matt also provided a break-down of the financial side of the project where a WaterSmart Grant has been submitted and other clean energy incentives could be used which would mean the project will be paid off within 2 to 8.5 years.

**Next meeting set for April 6 at 9:30 am** (hybrid meeting).

**Meeting adjourned at 2:10 PM.**