MINUTES

Taylor Local Users Group

May 5th, 2023

**TLUG Attendees:**

TLUG Representatives Present:

Ryan Birdsey (Flatwater Recreation)

Don Sabrowski (Chair)

Mark Schumacher (Boating Interests)

David Fisher (Property Owners)

Roark Kiklevich (Wade Fishing via Zoom)

Ernie Cockrell (Taylor Place via Zoom)

TLUG Representatives Absent:

Andy Spann (Agricultural)

Others in person:

Beverly Richards (UGRWCD)

Sonja Chavez (UGRWCD)

Bill Gallenbeck (Taylor Dam Outlet Operations)

Sue Uerling (UGRWCD)

Alana Nichols (UGRWCD)

Cheryl Cwelich (UGRWCD)

Dustin Brown (Scenic River Tours)

By Zoom:

Erik Knight (BOR

Dave Gochis (UCAR)

Steve Anders (USGS)

John Bocchino (Riffle and Rise LLC)

Jay Whitacre (Irwin Guides)

Roark Kiklevich (Wade Fishing)

Kestrel Kunz (American Whitewater)

1. **Introduction & Approval of Minutes:**

Following introductions Don Sabrowski welcomed the newest TLUG member, David Fisher.

Sonja Chavez distributed a draft letter of support to the TLUG describing the project proposal to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Snow Water Supply Forecasting (R23AS00079) grant. *The Upper Gunnison River Basin* *Snow Water Measurement* draft project proposal identifies three critical snowpack water supply measurement activities: 1) Conduct annual airborne LiDAR measurement snow flights (2 per year for 3 years) to obtain highly accurate snow depth and SWE data, 2) coordinate the data and expand/utilize our existing SNOTEL and snolite ground stations, and 3) install a series of LoRaWan towers and soil moisture measurement devices to refine model output.

Sonja Chavez would like TLUG’s agreement to have chairman Sabrowski sign. She mentioned the grant does not require a match, but it is recommended. Since the UGRWCD board of directors’ support ASO forecast measurements, she may be initially asking them for $20,000 per year to match this grant. Sonja believes the District can match a minimum of $150,000 through in-kind services. All information for this grant is public and the model measurements will be an open source.

David Fisher asked if details on results will be visible. All information for this grant is public and the model measurements will be an open source.

Sonja Chavez mentioned the focused watershed locations for measurements will be the East, Taylor and Upper Ohio Creek.

Mark Schumacher made a motion to approve the letter of support for the WaterSMART grant application for ASO flights. Ryan Birdsey seconded, and the motion carried.

1. **CBRFC Water Supply Update and USBR Model Forecast:** Erik Knight presented the CBRFC forecast. He mentioned the May forecast came back unchanged from the mid-April forecast. The inflows to Taylor Park Reservoir are still 120% of average. It is possible for peak flows to be pushed back a few days in June with cooler temperatures in the forecast. It is still considered a wet category year with a required flushing flow of 10 days at 445 cfs. The model is still projecting Taylor Park Reservoir to reach almost full capacity with a max fill just 1.7 feet below spillway crest. The end of October storage content is still forecasted to be 75,000 acre-feet.

Based on the CBRFC forecast, the current release is at 250 cfs and will increase to 300 cfs on May 10th. In the first week of June the flow releases will increase to meet the 10 days at 445 cfs.

The Reservoir will have no issue reaching the average year content. The projected inflows are in the upper 15th percentile of historic inflows and the SWE in the Taylor River Basin is 126% of median. Over the last week there has been rapid snow melt causing a 30%-35% decrease in snowpack as measured at two SNOTEL sites. The monthly snow accumulation for the Upper Gunnison in April is 83% of average with the overall current season at 114% of average.

1. **Latest UCAR WRF-Hydro Model Forecast:** David Gochis presented the latest WRF-Hydro model forecast. He mentioned there have been no ASO flights since the April forecast and Jeff Deems is still expecting to have an ASO flight around mid to late May. The snowpack had a 35% loss from peak values since the last assessment. The East is now projected to have 303,000 acre-feet.

Don Sabrowski asked Steve Anders when gages on Texas and Willow will be online. Steve Anders said all gages are online except for maybe the site on Elk River. Don Sabrowski asked how the sites had held up through the winter. Steve Anders said there was no damage from snow or ice to the gages and the sensors are responding with no issues.

1. **Preliminary TLUG Draft Operational Release Recommendations:**

Mark Schumacher asked Erik Knight if there is a reason that the required 10-day release is done at the start of June, typically during peak runoff, rather than releasing it earlier.

Erik Knight said historically it is done in the 1st week in June but it could be moved to sooner or later depending upon if issues are occurring on East River. He said releases could be adjusted but it doesn’t make a huge difference.

Erik mentioned that changing peak flow releases to late May will only be 50 cfs difference. If anyone would like to push peak flow releases to the last week of May, he can add that to the model.

Roark Kiklevich agreed to changing peak flow releases. He said the East River peaked at 1,700 cfs the day before the meeting. He said an earlier flow release is better as long as it is not impacting the rainbow trout spawn. He also believed the East River will be flowing at 3,000 cfs by June 10th and may even be pushing 4,000 cfs.

Sonja Chavez will reach out to Dan Brauch about moving peak release flows as it relates to the rainbow trout spawn.

Ryan Birdsey also agreed to changing peak flow releases because there are predicted flood stages for the town of Gunnison.

Ernie Cockrell made a motion to change the peak flow releases to the last week of May instead of the 1st week in June. Roark Kiklevich seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Erik Knight said he will move the 10 days at 445 cfs to begin on Friday, May 26th.

1. **Miscellaneous Updates:**

Sonja Chavez responded to an emergency operation project in the East River Basin. The river broke the bank and was flooding through private property onto Crested Butte Land Trust property. There could be negative impacts to public roads and to some GCEA infrastructure. UGRWCD offered to make $2,000 available for emergency funding to stabilize the bank and protect public infrastructure. She said it was important to act quickly to prevent negative impacts.

Don Sabrowski asked what is causing the riverbank to break and flood the ranch.

Sonja Chavez said the ranch has had flooding issues in the past but this year the riverbank broke at a new upstream point (Post meeting note: This is where the CBLT has proposed river restoration work).

Mark Schumacher said he doesn’t think it was a good idea to go ahead and grant emergency funds to the private ranch. He believes once word gets out more private property owners will expect the District to help them with other flood issues.

Sonja Chavez said the action was taken because it will affect public property and potentially the flow of the East River. (Post meeting note: CBLT has a 2023 UGRWCD grant award for river restoration work in this area).

1. **Citizens Comments:**

Dustin asked if it would be possible to reduce flows while tree removal is being done on the Taylor River. There are no trees that need to be removed at the moment but, hypothetically speaking, if a tree did need to be removed and flows are running high the damaged trees could put bridges in jeopardy.

Erik said it might be possible, but we would need to add it to the model to see if all other operations could still be met. Sonja Chavez and Erik Knight will have further discussions on the issue.

Ryan Birdsey asked if there are any emergency planning in place. Sonja Chavez doesn’t think so, but the UGRWCD has asked to be involved in County emergency response planning.

John Bocchino asked Erik Knight when will the flush of the Black Canyon begin and at what flow. Erik Knight said it still needs to be determined. Once Paonia Reservoir starts spilling there will be a spring peak operation centered around that.

1. **Schedule Next Meeting:**

Next meeting planned for Tuesday June 6th at 12:00 pm.

This meeting was adjourned: 1:22 p.m. by Chair Don Sabrowski.