

MINUTES
Taylor Local Users Group
August 8th, 2023

TLUG Attendees:

TLUG Representatives Present:

Ryan Birdsey (Flatwater Recreation)
Don Sabrowski (Chair)
Mark Schumacher (Boating Interests)
Roark Kiklevich (Wade Fishing)
Ernie Cockrell (Taylor Placer via Zoom)
Andy Spann (Agricultural via Zoom)

Others in person:

Rory Birdsey
Dan Brauch (Colorado Parks and Wildlife)
Beverly Richards (UGRWCD)
Sonja Chavez (UGRWCD)
Sue Uerling (UGRWCD)
Alana Nichols (UGRWCD)

By Zoom:

Erik Knight (BOR)
Dustin Brown (Scenic River Tours)

I. Introductions & Approval of Minutes:

Following introductions Chairman Don Sabrowski asked the Board if there were any requested changes to the July 10th, 2023, meeting minutes. There was no discussion or changes for the July 10th meeting minutes.

II. CBRFC Water Supply Update and USBR Model Forecast (Erik Knight – Bureau of Reclamation):

Erik Knight presented the CBRFC forecast. The final April-July inflow volume for Taylor Park Reservoir is 118,000 acre-feet and 126% of average. Over the month of July 2,000 acre-feet was lost. The forecast for August inflows is predicted to decrease by 10,000 acre-feet. These inflow decreases are due to the lack of monsoon season and dry conditions. The inflow graph for this year shows a nice volume and slow runoff in May and June. The sustained runoff from late May to the end of June, flowing at levels just under 1,000 cfs, contributed to a steady influx into Taylor Reservoir. There was a greater decrease in inflows than expected in July through August because of high temperatures and lack of precipitation. The current inflows are in the upper 25% range of historical inflows.

The current Taylor Park release is 350 cfs with intentions to hold this consistent release throughout the remainder of the month. The releases will drop to 300 cfs in September. The Taylor Park Operations graph shows a projected content of 97% full and a maximum fill of 103,509 acre-feet. This maximum content is about 1.35 ft under the spillway crest. Release adjustments were made to meet the target of 75,000 acre-feet in October. August and September will maintain the existing releases of 350 cfs. However, in October there will be a reduction to 227 cfs, followed by a decrease to 125 cfs around mid-October – an adjustment that has been expedited by 12 days compared to the previous model. These modifications will effectively manage the reservoir content, maintaining it at 75,200 acre-feet.

Ryan Birdsey asked Erik Knight if the 125 cfs release after October 31 will be the projected flow through the winter?

Erik Knight said it will decrease to 100 cubic feet per second on November 1st and maintain that flow through the winter season.

Ryan Birdsey asked Erik Knight if we see the forecast continue to drop what do we plan for in that case?

Erik Knight said if the forecast continues to drop that would come out of the month of October or even reductions in September.

Mark Schumacher believes we should wait for the end of August or for the September forecast first and see if we need to reduce. Hopefully at the end of August, there will have been some more rain.

Sonja Chavez said the forecast is not looking good for rain in late August.

III. Preliminary TLUG Draft Operational Release Recommendations:

Ryan Birdsey thinks it looks fine for now and we will just have to wait and see what happens in the forecast.

Roark Kiklevich agreed and would prefer to take water out in October. Taylor is so important right now and the water temperatures are currently running high. The East River is peaking at 65 degrees daily and the Taylor has been peaking at 58 degrees daily. The Taylor River water temperature is keeping Gunnison River at a 62-degree range which is important for the fishery.

Dan Brauch said for the brown trout spawn it would be good to get down to the minimum releases by mid-October to carry out through the winter. He's hoping to see decreased water temperature conditions by the end of August because the current water temperatures are high.

Roark Kiklevich asked if there is any temperature data collected at the outlet of the reservoir dam?

Sonja Chavez said there is no temperature data collected at the outlet of the reservoir. She did speak to USGS about installing a temperature sensor and what it would cost. USGS said a temperature sensor would cost around \$400 for the purchase and installation, and then \$400 a month for operations and maintenance. She reached out to Matt Feier of Gunnison County Electric Association and Steve Pope of the Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association and asked them for their support of installing a temperature gage and helping to financing it. She is planning to follow up with them to gather their insights and opinions on the matter.

Ernie Cockrell asked if conditions continue to be dry with no rain what is the plan? What would be the next cut?

Erik Knight said there is still room to cut from October since there was a good buffer built in initially. If not from October, then cuts could also be made at the end of September if necessary.

Ernie Cockrell said he has no suggestions, and he agrees the group should wait to see what happens in the next couple of weeks.

Ryan Birdsey asked Dan if it's better to decrease winter release flows in mid-October for brown trout.

Dan Brauch expressed concern that if the brown trout lays their eggs during higher water releases in elevated areas, they run the risk of their eggs drying out if the flow is reduced after they lay their eggs.

Erik Knight said there is a buffer in the model and the actual end of October content is currently 75,500 acre-feet.

Dan Brauch recommended decreasing to the proposed winter flows in mid-October.

Andy Spann said the plan looks good. He agreed that if cuts need to be made, they should come out of October and late September. He would prefer to keep flows as projected through the middle of September if possible.

IV. Miscellaneous Updates:

Dan Brauch presented an update on Spring Creek Reservoir. The maximum elevation for filling the Spring Creek Reservoir reached up to 35 feet. This allowed them to monitor the outlet and they noted there was seepage of concern around the spillway area. They are working with the state and it was decided there will be restrictions placed on the reservoir to keep the established target elevation at 28 feet, which is about 10 feet below full. There was work done to improve release capacity without engaging spillway. This included the installation of a syphon which, when engaged, significantly aided in lowering the storage levels. The second syphon will be installed next month. The syphons will allow CPW to control water inflow and releases and not engage the spillway, thus allowing them to keep reservoir at about 28 feet in the future. As of now, they don't have money allocated for

rebuilding the spillway. Dan predicts any rebuilding might be more in the 5-year timeframe.

Sonja Chavez said this would be a great project for UGRWCD grant program because more storage benefits everyone in Spring Creek and downstream.

Dan Brauch said they do have an engineer working locally that can respond to any questions or emails the group may have on this project.

Don Sabrowski asked if the current syphon installed was being used.

Dan Brauch said that it is not at this time, but it was operated for a while and now they are just running the outlet and there is still some seepage. The outlet doesn't open completely so most releases are from seepages coming through the dam. The storage levels do decrease from seepage openings that were recorded historically.

Ryan Birdsey asked if soft or hard tube syphons are being used.

Dan Brauch said they are hard steel syphon. They physically start and stop syphon right now.

Beverly Richards reported on the Lowline Fire. She said the group that is currently managing the fire is transitioning to a new work crew tomorrow. There is a red flag warning and for the past two days there has been concern about fire lines that they set on the southern and eastern divisions. There could be a chance for moisture (30-40% from Thursday to Saturday) with more wind than rainfall. The air quality is still being monitored and most impacts are around 2 a.m. to 3 a.m. with a UG quality. They are doing patrols and monitoring constantly along those fire lines.

Sonja Chavez said the District will be monitoring water quality in the area with real-time water quality monitoring at the existing gage on Baldwin. The District's secondary role will be bringing in additional resources from the CRCWD Board to assist with any issues coming up. Two focal points emerged in terms of the wildfire response that garnered attention. The first question was where the ditch alignments are and if this could be important for fires in the future. The second was how wet meadows can be used for a natural fire break, which might garner additional support and continue the program at a higher level.

Additional updates included the District's success in entering the second phase of the BOR snow water measurement grant process. Next week the UGRWCD will be giving a technical pitch to the BOR review panel and asking for a million dollars to continue ASO flights and modeling with WRF Hydro over three years. The District partners with and supports Jeff Deems and the airborne flight observatory team. The District has also begun the Drought Contingency Planning process and will be reaching out to the TLUG representatives for their input. The USGS has been awarded additional funding to conduct further research on harmful algae bloom in the Blue Mesa Reservoir, which requires additional funding for a local match.

V. Schedule Next Meeting:

Mid-August forecast zoom meeting: August 22nd at 12:00pm.

Next meeting planned for Friday September 8th at 12:00pm.

This meeting was adjourned at 12:41pm by Chair Don Sabrowski.

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