

MINUTES
Taylor Local Users Group
September 20th, 2023 at 12:00 p.m.
(held via Zoom Video/Teleconferencing)

TLUG Attendees:

TLUG Chair: Don Sabrowski

TLUG Representatives Present:

Mark Schumacher (Boating Interests)
David Fisher (Property Owners)
Roark Kiklevich (Wade Fishing Interests)
Andy Spann (Agriculture Interests)
Ernie Cockrell (Taylor Placer)
Ryan Birdsey (Flatwater Recreation Interests)

Others in attendance:

Doug Forshagen (Crystal Creek Homeowners)
Dustin Brown (Scenic River Tours)
Sean Slattery (Irwin Guides)
Jim Beasley (Wilder on the Taylor)
Dirk Schumacher (Three Rivers Resort)
John Bocchino (Riffle and Rise LLC)
David Gochis (University Corporation of Atmospheric Research - UCAR)
Sonja Chavez (UGRWCD)
Beverly Richards (UGRWCD)
Sue Uerling (UGRWCD)

I. Introductions & Approval of Minutes:

Chairman Don Sabrowski called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m. It was noted that Erik Knight of the Bureau of Reclamation was unable to be in attendance for the meeting today. Don asked for a roll call of those in attendance and Beverly Richards announced everyone on the Zoom meeting.

Don then asked if there were any requested changes or comments on the September 8th, 2023, meeting minutes. Ernie Cockrell suggested two changes as follows: Under II, at the end of the paragraph, he suggests instead of the sentence reading, “Erik recommends starting the decrease of releases to 200 cfs one week earlier,” changing it to “Erik recommends starting the October decrease of releases...” In addition, in the second to last paragraph in III, he recommends changing “He noted that as the hay meadows are being cut, they can use a little extra water before headgates are shut off,” to “After the hay is cut, extra water can be used.”

No other changes were requested.

Ernie Cockrell made a motion and Roark Kiklevich seconded approval of the September 8, 2023 Meeting Minutes with the changes noted. The motion carried.

II. Update from David Gochis, UCAR

Dave Gochis was asked to give an update on UCAR's data with respect to inflows and soil moisture content. Dave noted that their data has been consistent with the decreases noted in Erik Knight's email and reports. UCAR's model shows a very steep drop off in soil moisture in July and August. Although there were some rain occurrences that are shown as slight upticks on the graph, overall, the trend both with their model and with actual observations at Mirror Lake/Tin Cup and Trail Creek Pass stations have been that next to nothing in terms of soil moisture replenishment has been noted primarily due to the lack of a real monsoon season. The limited rainfall mostly ended up back in the atmosphere. Dave reported that as of their last forecast in August, their model was predicting April through October inflow of 129.3 kac-ft and the actual inflow according to the BOR was 130.5 kac-ft. To date, September 2023 inflow has been 3.6 kac-ft.

III. CBRFC Water Supply Update and USBR Model Forecast

General Manager Sonja Chavez reported that Erik Knight was not able to be at the meeting. His email notes and recommendations were shared with the TLUG representatives and projected for the meeting. Sonja said that as Dave Gochis reported, the soil saturation data is very relevant and she feels the basin will continue to experience declining hydrology and therefore, she recommends the TLUG representatives might want to consider being even more aggressive in reducing flows than Erik's recommendations. Sonja said that the Taylor Dam operator, Bill Gallenbeck, was due back on September 21. Chairman Sabrowski asked for recommendations from the representatives.

IV. Preliminary TLUG Draft Operational Release Recommendations

Ernie Cockrell noted that he is on the same page as Sonja in trying to be more aggressive to cutting flows and said he had previously emailed a chart showing his recommendations to the TLUG members and the resulting savings of water. This table was projected for everyone to see at the meeting. Ernie's recommendation was to begin a gradual ramp down of flows to reach 150 cfs by September 25th, where flows would remain until October 6th. He noted that this would result in savings of about 1,384 acre-feet of water over Erik's proposal. Ernie said that the problem is that if cuts are not made in September, then there really isn't much room to make more significant cuts in October and that getting down to 100 cfs early in October is not great for the fishery.

Sonja reported that she looked back in her notes on when Dan Brauch said flows should be stabilized for the brown trout spawning and Dan previously said flows should be stabilized by mid-October.

Mark Schumacher said he agrees that cuts need to be made sooner and offered an alternative of reducing flows to 225 cfs as soon as possible and then reducing flows to 100 cfs as of October 1st. Mark noted that this would save the rest of the season for the boaters and fishermen and would still provide water savings.

Sonja noted that Erik offered to run a couple of scenarios if the TLUG representatives wanted him to do so.

Andy Spann said he likes both Ernie's and Mark's proposals and would like to see differences between Mark and Ernie's proposals. Andy said that he was in favor of ramping down now and was in favor of going to 100 cfs at the beginning of October. Andy said the ag producers would like as much water as they can for as long as they can knowing that soil moisture content is down because that will affect ag producers next spring as well.

Roark Kiklevich said he would like to see Erik run one more scenario which is to go to 200 cfs as soon as possible (maintain 200 through September) and then go to 100 cfs as of October 1st.

Dave Fisher asked what the maximum ramp down per day would be that can happen without seeing bank sloughage or other riparian damage. Ernie said he believes that when flows are at above 200 cfs it is safe to ramp down at 50 cfs per day, but when drop below 200 cfs we ramp down by 25 cfs per day. Sonja agreed.

Mark Schumacher said that he was agreeable to what Roark was suggesting if that helps the group move forward. Andy Spann agreed to Roark's proposal as well. Mark said he would take his proposal off the table and ask Erik Knight to run just Ernie's and Roark's proposals.

Ryan Birdsey said he wished Erik was present to be able to answer questions. Ryan noted projected inflows on Erik's documents showed increases but no one on the TLUG believes that inflows are going to increase above current levels so he's comfortable with Roark's proposal as it allows for a little wiggle room if the actual inflows decrease.

Chairman Sabrowski asked what the group's consensus was on what amount of savings should be achieved. Sonja recommended that the total savings should be somewhere near 1,300 - 1,500 acre-feet to give a little buffer if inflows continue to decrease.

Ryan Birdsey offered that he would like to see what Erik's projections are if releases were decreased to 200 cfs immediately for the rest of September, then to 125 cfs for October 1-15th and then to 100 cfs from there on out, presuming that inflows stayed the same as the current actual inflows of 2,800 cfs. Again, according to his calculations this would lead to an end-of-year storage content of 76,000 acre-feet and provides a little wiggle room if actual inflows continue to drop. Ernie said that he would be more comfortable with a total savings of 1800-2000 acre-feet and would like to see those numbers from Erik.

Mark Schumacher made a motion that releases be reduced to 200 cfs as soon as possible and keep flows there through the end of September and then get information back from Erik Knight to make decisions about flows for October via email tomorrow. Andy Spann seconded the motion. Chairman Sabrowski asked for any further discussion. Ryan Birdsey said it should be conveyed to Erik Knight that all the representatives are in agreement about being more

aggressive in decreasing flows to try to offset the dropping inflows and that perhaps Erik can make a suggestion of a way to ramp down the flows more gradually at the beginning of October if the result will still meet the end-of-year storage objective of 75,000 acre-feet.

Discussion followed about possibly ramping down more slowly at the beginning of October or even the latter part of September, but it was noted that there was already a motion and second on the table. Roark Kiklevich was interested in how much the river dropped (inches) when we reduce by a certain cfs. Agreed to table as request is more complicated than it might initially seem.

Motion on Mark's proposal: Agree to reduce immediately to 200 cfs and have Eric run scenarios focused on saving between 1500 and 1800 cfs before making further decisions. The two potential post September 30th scenarios could include something like:

- Ramping down slowly from 200 cfs starting October 1 until we hit 125 cfs and maintaining through October 15th. Then reduce flows to 100 cfs on October 16 and maintain as winter flow rate; or
- Ramping down from 200 cfs starting on October 1 until we hit 100 cfs and maintaining as Winter flow rate.

A vote on Mark's proposal was taken and it passed with Ernie Cockrell dissenting.

Sonja said she would talk to Erik Knight and discuss some of the scenarios presented and have him run projections for reducing to 200 cfs as soon as possible and then options for getting to savings of 1500-1800 acre-feet of water utilizing a scenario similar to the above. She will report to the TLUG representatives as soon as Erik has run the projections.

V. Miscellaneous Updates

Chairman Sabrowski asked Sonja for any Miscellaneous Updates and she noted that the District was still awaiting a decision on the grant application to fund more ASO flights. She is expecting to get word now at the end of September or early October, unless there is a government shutdown at the end of the month as this could delay funding. She also reported that UGRWCD Director Dr. Rosemary Carroll is part of a team conducting research in the Taylor River looking at the hydrology of the basin. Dr. Carroll has also noted that in spite of a relatively wet winter with good snowpack, there has been little replenishment to the ground water supply at her sample sites. Dr. Carroll and her team will be looking at the effects of ongoing climate change on the Taylor Basin.

VI. Citizen Comments

Chairman Sabrowski asked for Citizen Comments and heard from Jim Beasley of Wilder on the Taylor, John Bocchino of Riffle and Rise LLC and Doug Forshagen of Crystal Creek Homeowners. Their comments are summarized here:

Doug Forshagen said that he would like to see the recommendations for releases be more aggressive, as Ernie Cockrell suggested, as he does not think inflows will hold up with the projections and he would like to see more of a cushion in Taylor Reservoir for the end of the season.

Jim Beasley expressed his thanks to the TLUG members for their efforts in protecting the fishery and he agrees with Doug that the group should try to consider more of a storage cushion for the reservoir.

John Bocchino encouraged the TLUG representatives to consider stepping down the releases some in September instead of waiting until October as he believes inflows for the remainder of September and October are going to come in at less than 2,800 acre-feet per month. Therefore, he would like to see some version of releases that keep a decent flow now but provide for more of a buffer into October.

VII. Next Meeting

It was suggested that the group tentatively set a TLUG meeting for next week to discuss the projections submitted by Erik Knight. A meeting was scheduled via Zoom only for Wednesday, September 27, 2023 at 1:00 p.m.

The September 20, 2023 TLUG meeting was adjourned by Chairman Sabrowski at 12:57 p.m.