

MINUTES
Taylor Local Users Group
September 27th, 2023 at 1:00 p.m.
(held via Zoom Video/Teleconferencing)

TLUG Attendees:

TLUG Chair: Don Sabrowski

TLUG Representatives Present:

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:

Dustin Brown (Scenic River Tours)
Patrick Blackdale (Three Rivers Resort)
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 1:02 p.m. Don asked for a roll call of those in attendance and Beverly Richards announced everyone on the Zoom meeting.

II. CBRFC Water Supply Update and USBR Model Forecast

Erik Knight of the Bureau of Reclamation reported that since his last TLUG report, there was a loss of over 1900-acre feet of inflows. He noted that currently the release is set at 200 cfs with the plan to reduce flows to 100 cfs by October 9, leaving a projected year-end storage level of 76,000-acre feet of water. Erik reported that the model includes 6,500-acre feet of inflows through the end of October, which is a little more than the actual inflows recorded for September, which Erik predicts will end up between 5600 to 5800 acre feet.

Sonja Chavez said that although Mark Schumacher was not able to attend, he had spoken with her by phone and said, on behalf of the boaters, he was fine with dropping the current releases more quickly as it appears the inflows are coming in lower than predicted. Sonja said due to the dry soil moisture content, she believes it would be prudent to consider decreasing releases as soon as possible to try to meet the year-end storage objective of 75,000-acre feet.

Ernie Cockrell said that the lower inflows were exactly what he had been concerned about for awhile and that is why he had made recommendations to the group to consider lowering the releases for the past three months, although he was out voted. He said he is in favor of decreasing releases as soon as possible.

Dave Gochis offered to run another forecast based on their most recent measurements to see if their data would result in lower inflows than what the CBRFC forecast is predicting for October. Dave did agree with Sonja that the soil moisture content is very low.

IV. Preliminary TLUG Draft Operational Release Recommendations

The consensus of the group was to move forward with decreasing flows as soon as possible. There were several recommendations put forward that basically cut flows by 25 cfs every couple of days through October 15th. Ryan Birdsey expressed concerns that this systematic reduction might not result in reaching the year-end storage objective of 75,000 if inflows are even lower than predicted. He recommended that releases be decreased each day until reaching 125 cfs by September 30th. Then he suggested a one or two day pause and then having another decrease to 100 cfs on October 2nd or 3rd, at which time the releases would remain through the winter months. The TLUG members present were in favor of this recommendation. Erik said he would get this recommendation in place as soon as possible and offered to send updated Taylor operations reports out as soon as they were available after October 1st. *(These reports dated October 3, 2023 are included with these minutes.)*

Sonja expressed her frustration with having to contact and get approval from every representative of the Four Parties before a change in releases can be made. She noted that this can delay reaching the recommended targets by several days if one or more of the representatives does not respond promptly. She asked Erik why, if TLUG is just trying to hit the year-end storage objective as provided by the Stipulation, is it necessary to get the Four Parties approval every time a change in the release is recommended. Erik said he could talk to Ed Warner again about this, but that last time he asked Ed about consulting the Four Parties, that was the message he got.

A couple of the TLUG representatives expressed frustration that even though it was a wet year, the group is right back to where they have been at the end of dry years, too, trying to figure out how to save and store more water. Erik was asked if it would be more prudent to hold off on higher releases in spring and early summer in order to avoid this dilemma. Erik said that part of the operations this year was to prevent water from spilling over the dam during peak snowmelt. He noted that the only requirement during a wet year is that there has to be the 10-day mandatory release of 450 cfs but that there is some flexibility as to when this needs to occur. Other representatives noted that early summer is the time when many of the water users need and rely on the higher releases.

VII. Next Meeting

There was discussion about whether or not to hold another meeting in early October when the next set of data is available. Sonja offered to send an email to TLUG representatives and stakeholders announcing the plans to decrease releases down to 100 cfs on October 3rd. She said she would also forward the Taylor Operations reports from Erik Knight as soon as she receives them and if there was anything alarming, she would contact the TLUG representatives. Therefore, another meeting was not scheduled.

The September 27, 2023 TLUG meeting was adjourned by Chairman Sabrowski at 1:31 p.m.

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