

MINUTES
Taylor Local Users Group
May 8, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.

TLUG Attendees:

TLUG Chair: Don Sabrowski

TLUG Representatives Present:

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

Others in attendance:

Sonja Chavez (UGRWCD)
Beverly Richards (UGRWCD)
Sue Uerling (UGRWCD)
Alana Nichols (UGRWCD)

By Zoom:

Peter Dunda (Taylor Canyon Homeowner)
David Gochis (Airborne Snow Observatories)
Erik Knight (U. S. Bureau of Reclamation)
Doug Forshagen (Crystal Creek Homeowner)
Dustin Brown (Scenic River Tours)
Reece Carpenter (USBR)
Ed Warner (USBR)
Raquel Flinker (Colorado River District)
Bryan Moore (USGS)

I. Introductions & Approval of Minutes:

Chairman Don Sabrowski called the meeting to order at 9:59 a.m. The minutes from the April 9, 2024, TLUG meeting were presented for review. No changes were requested. Andy Spann made a motion and Dave Fisher seconded approval of the April 9, 2024, Meeting Minutes. The motion carried.

II. CBRFC Water Supply Update and USBR Model Forecast

Erik Knight of the Bureau of Reclamation reported on the Taylor Park snowpack which uses two SNOTEL sites in the basin. He noted that the peak snow accumulation in April reached 118 percent of normal. There has been a substantial decrease, with approximately half of the snowpack in Taylor Park having melted as of two days ago. The next graph shows the entire Upper Gunnison Basin and a monthly break down of snow accumulation, March had the most snow accumulation of 127 percent and dropped in April to 71 percent of average monthly snow accumulation. There was a small amount of snow accumulation in May which helped keep the runoff forecast steady.

The May 1st forecasted inflow volume for April through July 2024 is now 94,000 acre-feet, which is 100 percent of average. There was an extra 2,000 acre-feet of inflow during the last week of April that was not predicted. According to the Taylor Park Historical Inflows graph the current runoff is projected “average” going forward.

Erik reported that the reservoir is projected to reach a maximum fill content of 101,627 acre-feet of water and a year-end storage content of 71,400 acre-feet. On Monday, releases increased to 200 cfs and there will be additional increases in May before meeting the peak five-day flushing release of 445 cfs which is currently scheduled for the first week of June. The max fill amount is 2.3 feet below the spillway crest. Erik reported that in the draft operations plan, a steady flow release of 400 cfs is planned from the second half of June through the first half of July. Following this, the releases will decrease to 350 cfs by September. Subsequently, there will be a further reduction to 250 cfs in mid-September, with October seeing a decrease to 200 cfs. Finally, the release will taper off to 85 cfs. It is projected that the year-end storage content will be 1,400 acre-feet above the target of 70,000 acre-feet.

Andy Spann inquired about the location of the second SNOTEL site, as he was only aware of the one - Park Cone.

Erik Knight confirmed that the second site was at Independence Pass.

Beverly Richards added that there was also a SNOTEL site located on Upper Taylor.

III. Current Snowpack and Soil Moisture Report - David Gochis, Airborne Snow Observatory (ASO)

Dave Gochis of ASO Inc., presented the ASO/WRF Hydro assimilation which showed a combination of results from the last ASO survey and most recent snowpack analyses from the model. The last survey was from April 2nd, and the next flight is scheduled for this upcoming week depending on weather conditions. The latest assessment of snowpack in the Taylor Reservoir watershed indicates a volume of 91,000 acre-feet, representing approximately 58% of the peak seasonal accumulation. The basin is approaching the halfway point in snowmelt. All SnoLite stations have fallen below of seasonal peak values to date: Tin Cup/ Mirror Lake- 36

inches (3" of new snow), Cottonwood Pass- 65 inches (3 days ago), Trail Creek- 30 inches (8" of new snow), and Italian Creek- 79 inches (13" of new snow).

The median forecast for flows into Taylor Reservoir from the Taylor River and its tributaries is 110 kac-ft. The Taylor River carries the bulk of those flows at 59 kac-ft, Texas Creek at 21 kac-ft and Willow Creek at 20 kac-ft.

Dave Gochis presented a soil moisture trace for the month of April up to May 1st, indicating soil moisture saturation at 53 percent. He noted that this saturation is expected to increase with the recent snowstorm. Dave highlighted that conditions are optimal for snow melt runoff and soil saturation to generate runoff. He also mentioned that snowpack temperature analyses indicate high temperatures at all elevations, with the snowpack nearing melting point and poised for runoff. Additionally, Dave discussed albedo trends, noting that the majority of April saw high reflection rates, with a decrease observed towards the end of the month. This trend aligns with Erik's model regarding melt production as runoff commences and snow ages.

Dave Gochis inquired if anyone had questions. Ernie then addressed Dave, expressing concern about reconciling differences in forecast models. He pointed out that while the WRF Hydro/ASO predicts 110,000 acre-feet inflow into Taylor Park, the CBRFC estimates only 94,000 acre-feet, which falls below the 90 percent probability threshold. Ernie sought guidance on managing the substantial 16,000 acre-feet difference between the two forecasts. David recognized the difference and reminded Ernie that the next airborne LiDAR flight will give us that helpful verification.

IV. Preliminary TLUG Draft Operational Release Recommendations

Don Sabrowski asked Erik what would happen if we delayed release increases by a week and if this would still allow him to manage the reservoir to prevent potential spilling.

Erik Knight said that releases are scheduled to increase to 250cfs on May 15th and then by the end of May first part for June we jump to the five-day flushing release of 445 cfs. He mentioned there is room for flexibility and changes in releases if needed.

Don Sabrowski asked the TLUG how they felt about delaying increasing releases to 250 cfs by a week and how that might affect the users. David Fisher indicated that this could save us 600 acre feet.

Mark Schumacher said raft guide training starts May 20th and they would like to have at least 250 cfs starting that Monday.

Ryan Birdsey expressed agreement with holding releases and cautioned that we shouldn't forget about examining the timing of the peak on the East with the 5 day flushing flow to ensure that we didn't cause flooding downstream.

Erik Knight confirmed that delaying the increased release by 5 days according to the Excel spreadsheet model, would save approximately 500 acre-feet and result in the water level being

about 2 feet below the spillway crest. He assured the group that holding back the release until May 20th should pose no issues. The average peak for the East River is 1,700 cfs at Almont, with timing being uncertain. If this peak is synchronized with the peak release from Taylor Reservoir, it could result in flows around 2,000-2,500 cfs which should not be an issue for the community.

Don Sabrowski asked the TLUG for a motion to hold Taylor Park release increases until May 20th. Andy Spann made a motion and Mark Schumacher seconded approval. The motion carried.

V. Miscellaneous Matters

Sonja Chavez proposed inviting Sarah Tessendorf to present at the next TLUG meeting and mentioned her ongoing research on the UGRWCD cloud seeding program. Sarah is investigating the location of remote cloud seeding generators and the dispersion of snow resulting from these events to ensure they are strategically placed.

Sonja Chavez also mentioned the Western Water Weather and Intelligence Center's plan to install the gap radar by July 15th. She mentioned integrating the gap radar data with existing forecast models would be beneficial. Sonja highlighted efforts, alongside Raquel Flinker from the Colorado River District, to apply for the Bureau of Reclamation Snow Water Measurement grant. The application, focuses on benefits to annual inflow forecasting, coordination of reservoir releases and scientific studies being conducted in the basin. The application deadline is May 10th. The total project cost is \$2.95 million with partner match in excess of \$1.75 million. Partners include: USGS, DOE, UGRWCD, Colorado River District, North Fork Water Conservancy District, and the State of Colorado. Sonja expressed optimism about the potential opportunities and hopes to garner BOR's approval this time. She also sought TLUG authorization for Chair Don Sabrowski to sign a letter of support and there were no objections.

Sonja mentioned discussions with BLM regarding a "snowtopography" study they are planning to implement in the Powderhorn area. Snowtopography utilizes field game cameras to assess snow depth across various elevations, complementing SNOTEL data which is limited to elevations above 9,500 feet. She plans to explore this further and will bring any information of interest to the TLUG.

UGRWCD General Council John McClow is set to meet with the BOR to discuss updates to the 1975 storage exchange agreement, with an update expected at the next board meeting.

Ernie raised concerns about the significant decrease in releases from 200 cfs to 85 cfs in October, emphasizing potential risks for macro-invertebrates. Further discussion on this matter was tabled pending future forecasts and Erik indicated that ramp-down can take into account not wanting to strand macro-invertebrates.

Mark Schumacher reported that he met with the County last Friday regarding the Shady Island put-in. The County acknowledged some errors in the ramp's placement and stated that modifications would be made to ensure accessibility and that they were able to come to

agreement on reasonable commercial parking prices. Plans for the summer are finalized, and efforts are underway to complete the bathrooms before the boating season begins.

Sonja Chavez informed the board about the proposed Home Ditch diversion improvement project. She highlighted a headgate located just below the ~~Trampy~~Trampe property, which will involve constructing a rock cross vane in order to check-up water. Sonja emphasized the need for outreach to spread awareness about the project and its implications. Construction is not expected to commence before this fall.

VI. Citizen Comments

Chair Don Sabrowski asked for input from any citizens on the Zoom meeting throughout the meeting and no citizen comments were received.

VII. Next Meeting

The next TLUG meeting is scheduled for Friday, June 7, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.

Sonja will inform TLUG about the timing of the airborne LiDAR flights and any potential changes needed in flow recommendations. The group emphasized that they trusted that Erik would make any necessary adjustments to prevent spilling.

The May 8th, 2024 TLUG meeting was adjourned by Chairman Sabrowski at 10:57 a.m.