

MINUTES
Taylor Local Users Group
June 21st, 2024

TLUG Attendees:

TLUG Chair: Don Sabrowski

TLUG Representatives Present:

Mark Schumacher (Boating Interests)

Roark Kiklevich (Wade Fishing Interests)

Ernie Cockrell (Taylor Placer via Zoom)

David Fisher (Property Owners Interests via Zoom)

Ryan Birdsey (Flatwater Recreation Interests via Zoom)

Andy Spann (Irrigation Interests)

Others in Person:

Dustin Brown (Scenic River Tours)

Beverly Richards (UGRWCD)

Sonja Chavez (UGRWCD)

Alana Nichols (UGRWCD)

By Zoom:

Erik Knight (Bureau of Reclamation)

David Gochis (Airborne Snow Observatory)

Doug Forshagen (Crystal Creek Homeowner's Association)

Raquel Flinker (Colorado River Water Conservation District)

I. Introductions & Approval of Minutes

Following introductions, Mark Schumacher addressed the motion from the June 7th TLUG meeting. Mark clarified that his motion was to reduce the flow to 450 cfs on July 1st, noting that the board would not meet again in June unless there were major changes in the forecast.

Ernie Cockrell also requested a change in the meeting minutes. He mentioned that he proposed an additional 50 cfs for 3 days, raising the flow from 550 cfs to 600 cfs. Instead of asking Erik if there was a reason to wait for 3 days at an additional 50 cfs, this request should be reflected on page three of the meeting minutes.

Mark moved to approve with the set changes. Roark seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

II. CBRFC Water Supply Update and USBR Model Forecast

Erik Knight of the Bureau of Reclamation reported that the June mid-forecasted inflow volume for April through July remains unchanged at 106,000 acre-feet, which is 113 percent of average. He mentioned that while the forecast has not changed, there is a possibility of slightly higher inflows. The June volume has been reduced to 57,000 acre-feet, a significant drop from what was expected two weeks ago, with some of the June volume moved into July.

Regarding Taylor Park, Erik noted a small peak around 1400 cfs on the inflow graph, expected to peak today and taper off by the end of the weekend. This has reduced the maximum fill to 102,488 acre-feet, just two feet away from the top of the spillway. Releases have been decreased from 600 cfs to approximately 550 cfs today. Erik confirmed no changes to the current release pattern and suggested that these releases could be extended until the end of July. Maintaining the current release pattern and flows at 450 cfs until the end of July would project reservoir levels to reach around 75,080 acre-feet by the end of October.

Mark Schumacher asked how the Bureau of Reclamation and the four parties feel about extra storage at the end of October. Erik indicated that it doesn't affect the water rights; it's just about how users want to use the water. He said they encourage water users to use water in the reservoir based on what they would like to carry over to next year in case of a dry year or use it all.

Sonja mentioned that they don't want to deny water users when there is additional storage available.

Don asked Erik to compare flows from last year. Erik responded that last year at this time it was 450 cfs and was maintained until the first week of July. They then cut to 350 cfs in the third week of July and to somewhere between 325 cfs in mid-August before ramping down again in mid-September. Erik said last year they were targeting 75,000 acre-feet of storage.

III. ASO Flight and Data Report- Dave Gochis, Airborne Snow Observatory (ASO)

Dave Gochis of ASO Inc. presented the ASO/WRF Hydro assimilation forecast for the April through July period in Taylor Basin. The Taylor Reservoir inflow is forecasted at 115,000 acre-feet. As of June 17th, there is still 2.4 kaf in the Taylor Basin and 8.5 kaf in the East River. The ASO assimilation snowmelt from April 1 through June 17, 215 Kaf has entered the basin, with a significant portion ~~50,000-acre~~50,000-acre feet contributing to evapotranspiration, shallow groundwater recharge, and evaporation. All SNOTEL stations have zeroed out, with the highest stations being Italian and Cottonwood. Recent warm conditions have accelerated snowmelt. Basin soil moisture remains high, particularly at higher elevations, despite all snow having melted out. Recent rainfall has helped reduce evapotranspiration slightly, providing some relief. Peak flow has passed at Texas Creek, Willow Creek, and Taylor River at Taylor Reservoir, with current levels slightly lower at 115 kaf compared to previous years.

IV. Preliminary TLUG Draft Operational Release Recommendations

Ernie expressed a desire to discuss the end-of-season ramp down, suggesting that Erik model some two-day pauses during the ramp down. He emphasized that a minimum of 70,000 acre-feet of storage is essential but planning for additional winter storage would be beneficial. He suggested adjusting the ending ramp down accordingly.

Andy proposed reducing the flow to 400 cfs during the last two weeks of July and maintaining 350 cfs through September, which would benefit both irrigators and boaters. His aim was to conserve as much water as possible while still meeting needs in September.

Don inquired about how Erik determined the flow rates for the end of July. Erik indicated that dropping to 400 cfs by mid-July was feasible. Andy mentioned the option of releasing 450 cfs if necessary.

Mark was open to reducing to 400 cfs by the end of July. He also recommended maintaining 350 cfs until September 15 for boating and suggested 250 cfs in October for fishing.

Ernie raised concerns about the impact of rapid ramp downs on macroinvertebrates, asking for pauses to support them.

Roark highlighted that October's water flow is crucial for fishing and that additional water would help manage river temperatures. He supported maintaining 450 cfs in July and allowed Erik the discretion to prevent the reservoir from spilling.

Ryan agreed that extending the water flow was manageable and emphasized the importance of gradual ramp-downs, especially given the full wetlands and willow areas in the river basin, which had not seen such water levels in years. He supported water conservation.

The motion is to reduce the flow to 400 cfs on July 15, maintain it through the end of July, drop to 350 cfs in August, and hold until September 15, then reduce to 250 cfs in the first weeks of October, with a total ramp down of 165 acre-feet. The last two weeks of October to reach the final flow rate, rather than adhering strictly to the 16th.

Mark moved to approve the motion, Andy seconded, and the motion carried.

Ernie reminded the group that Dan Brauch had mentioned fisheries spawning. He asked Erik to run the numbers before the final vote. Erik confirmed that the model accounted for the changes, resulting in an end-of-October content of 73,700 acre-feet. The motion carried.

V. Miscellaneous Matters

Sonja will present the proposal to the four parties and ensure that she and Erik are aligned. The board suggested involving the press in the spring to provide updates on spring releases and inform the general public, as there has been confusion in recent months about flows and safety, causing public concern.

Sonja agreed to engage with the newspapers, noting that sometimes they may request corrections, while other times they may not. Andy added that it could be interesting to include parts of the forecast in these communications.

VI. Adjournment

The next TLUG meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 10th, at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom only.

The June 21st, 2024 TLUG meeting was adjourned by Chairman Sabrowski at 10:46 a.m.