

MINUTES
Taylor Local Users Group
April 10, 2025, 9:00 a.m.

TLUG Attendees:

TLUG Chair: Don Sabrowski

TLUG Representatives Present:

Ryan Birdsey (Flatwater Recreation Interests via Zoom)

Ernest Cockrell (Taylor Placer via Zoom)

David Fisher (Property Owners)

Roark Kiklevich (Wade Fishing Interests)

Mark Schumacher (Boating Interests)

Andy Spann (Irrigation Interests via Zoom)

Other Attendees:

Beverly Richards (UGRWCD)

Sue Uerling (UGRWCD)

Giulio Del Piccolo (Colorado Parks and Wildlife)

Jenna Svoboda (Colorado Parks and Wildlife)

Patrick Plumley (Gunnison River Resident and Fishing Enthusiast)

By Zoom:

Erik Knight (BOR)

Rory Birdsey (Taylor Reservoir Dam Operator)

Dustin Brown (Scenic River Tours)

Racquel Flinker (Colorado River Water Conservancy District)

Doug Forshagen (Crystal Creek Homeowners)

David Gochis (Airborne Snow Observatory)

Elliott Manning, (Eleven)

Jay Whitacre (Irwin Guides)

I. Introductions and Approval of Minutes

Chairman Don Sabrowski called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. The minutes from March 12, 2025 TLUG meeting were presented for review. No changes were requested. Mark Schumacher motioned and Roark Kiklevich seconded approval of the March 12, 2025 Meeting Minutes. The motion carried.

II. Upper Gunnison Basin April Water Supply Report - Beverly Richards

Beverly presented a water supply report, highlighting that Gunnison County's drought conditions are in a better position for this date compared to last year on this date, but that the area around Gunnison County is starting to degrade quickly with the recent warmer temperatures. The report also showed that the area has received little to no precipitation in the past 30 days, and the seven-day forecast indicates no precipitation except for very small areas throughout the basin. The year-to-date precipitation is at 99% of the median, and the snow water equivalent is at 102%. The average temperature has been increasing, and streamflows are below the historical average. NOAA/NIDIS is predicting that all of the southwestern United States will be experiencing severe drought conditions throughout the summer.

III. CBRFC Water Supply Update and USBR Model Forecast – Erik Knight, USBR

Erik Knight with the US Bureau of Reclamation provided information from the April 1st CBRFC forecast. The forecasted April to July runoff is 84,000 acre-feet, which is 89 percent of average and is 1,000 acre-feet less than the March 15th forecast. Erik also discussed the projected inflow hydrograph, which shows an earlier than normal runoff timing. The reservoir is expected to reach a maximum fill of 100,000 acre-feet and end the year with just over 70,000 acre feet. The operations plan includes a period of 400 cfs or higher in the first week of June, as required by the Stipulation during an average water year. Erik also discussed the snow accumulation, which peaked at 97% of normal in the Taylor River basin but noted that they are seeing snowmelt early now. The Upper Gunnison Basin snow accumulation chart showed well above average snowfall for October and November, but below average precipitation for December and January. Although there was a snowfall event in the early part of April, the rest of the month is not looking promising for further precipitation and warmer conditions forecasted.

Erik discussed the reservoir's capacity and peak flow, noting that it will likely reach maximum capacity near the middle to end of June at about three feet below the spillway. Director Andy Spann inquired about the soil moisture content in the Taylor Basin. Erik reported that currently, soil moisture is slightly above average but that this could be a little inflated with some of the recent snow melt. Mr. Patrick Plumley asked about the reasoning behind and purpose of the five-day flushing releases. Erik explained this is determined by the Stipulation, which sets the requirements for the number of days for water releases according to the type of water year as follows: above average (wet) is 10 days, average is 5 days, and below average (dry) does not require any flushing releases. Ernie Cockrell further explained the purpose of the releases, emphasizing that the Stipulation's purpose is to try to mimic natural flow rates to flush out sediment and help support macroinvertebrates for the benefit of the fishery.

IV. WRF-Hydro Model Forecast Reports (ASO, Inc.)

David Gochis of Airborne Snow Observatories presented the latest snowpack survey data that was collected from the ASO flight from April 7th in the basin. He noted there has been a slight dip in snowpack compared to last year but overall the snowpack is close to the long-term average. He highlighted that they are now seeing warmer conditions and earlier melt-out compared to last year, with the snowpack temperatures at or near the melting point at this time. The forecasted snow melt is expected to wrap up by early to mid-June, earlier than last year. David also mentioned that it has been a light dust-on-snow year so far, which could be beneficial for the melt season.

TLUG Representative Roark Kiklevich asked about an article he had read referencing a new NASA satellite, SWOT. Roark said the article reported that “Colorado does not know how much water it has.” David replied that while it is always beneficial to have more data for comparison, the NASA satellite is not expected to provide significant real-time information for Colorado's smaller water bodies and seasonal snowpacks at this time. It was reported that SWOT looks at 3,000 sites in the state and has a frequency of reporting every two weeks.

TLUG Representative Mark Schumacher asked if it would be possible to access the slides and data report that David presented, and it was agreed that staff would make the information available to the TLUG representatives via email. The next ASO flight is tentatively scheduled for May 15th.

V. Preliminary TLUG Draft Operational Release Recommendations

Chair Don Sabrowski asked the TLUG representatives for their recommendations for reservoir operations. The consensus was that if possible, the group would prefer to remain more conservative upfront and hold back some of the water. Andy Spann reported that if conditions continue to be hot and dry through May, then the irrigators would need the water earlier, so he couldn't recommend reducing the early May flows. Mark Schumacher and Dustin Brown both reported that their raft guide will start their training on May 20, so their preference would be to leave flows at or about the recommended 250 cfs for that period. Ryan Birdsey and Ernie Cockrell noted that they had not had time to dig into the data Erik presented to determine if there could be any savings earlier in May or June. The final determination was to leave the proposed operation releases the same as recommended in Erik's report for now and wait to see how the mid-April forecast looks. A tentative TLUG Meeting was set for April 21 at 9 a.m. and the May meeting was set for May 8th at 9 a.m. Calendar invitations will be sent to TLUG representatives via email.

VI. Spring Creek Reservoir Update – Giulio Del Piccolo and Jenna Svoboda, CPW

Mr. Piccolo and Ms. Svoboda reported that Colorado Parks and Wildlife plans to keep the outlet pipe at Spring Creek Reservoir open during runoff season to stay at or below the 28-foot storage restriction, which is 10 feet below the spillway and they will use the siphons if needed. They will maintain this consistent water level throughout the summer for a seasonal fishery before draining the reservoir in the fall, likely in late September or October. They will stock the reservoir with rainbow trout for the summer season. Ms. Svoboda reported that CPW is seeing some significant dam deterioration and that the piping that was replaced last

year will not help with the deterioration. The CPW is pursuing dam rehabilitation/replacement, which will be dependent upon funding and manpower, with construction to start potentially in 2027 or 2028.

VII. Miscellaneous Matters

Taylor Dam Operator Rory Birdsey was asked if the hydroelectric generator at Taylor Park Reservoir has been fixed. He reported that the generator is still offline due to vibration issues which is causing the automatic bypass to not operate correctly. Rory reported that the parts are supposed to be coming this week and that hopefully the issue will be fixed shortly.

Beverly Richards said they had met with a gap weather radar provider to discuss the possible placement of their system in the Upper Gunnison Basin. This company had worked with La Plata County and Alamosa to place their systems in those areas. They will be evaluating the chosen location at Big Mesa to determine if that is the best spot and what would need to be used to fill that gap.

Staff invited the meeting attendees to come to the Colorado River District's "State of the River" dinner and presentation on April 17th at 6 p.m. at the Fred Field Center and then to come to the free film presentation "Thinking Like Water" on April 18th at 5:30 p.m. at the Western University Center Theatre.

VIII. Citizens Comments

There were no Citizens' Comments

IX. Adjournment

The April 10th, 2025 TLUG meeting was adjourned by Chairman Sabrowski at 10:08 a.m.