

MINUTES
Taylor Local Users Group
April 21, 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 via Zoom)

Roark Kiklevich (Wade Fishing Interests)

Mark Schumacher (Boating Interests)

Other Attendees:

Beverly Richards (UGRWCD)

By Zoom:

Erik Knight (BOR)

Conor Felleter (BOR)

Rory Birdsey (Taylor Reservoir Dam Operator)

Dustin Brown (Scenic River Tours)

Giulio Del Piccolo (Colorado Parks and Wildlife)

Racquel Flinker (Colorado River Water Conservancy District)

Doug Forshagen (Crystal Creek Homeowners)

David Gochis (Airborne Snow Observatory)

I. Introductions and Approval of Minutes

Chairman Don Sabrowski called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

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

Erik Knight with the US Bureau of Reclamation provided information from the April 15th forecast, this was not provided by CBRFC as they have discontinued issuing the mid-month forecasts due to staffing issues. The information provided represents the range that the daily raw ESP forecast model has been experiencing for the past few days. No release changes are planned before the next TLUG meeting in early May.

Erik provided two operational scenarios for the forecasts. The first scenario was in the lower average hydrologic category and shows 78,000 acre-feet of runoff, which is 83% of average and is in the lower regions of the average category. This is a decrease of 6,000 acre-feet

from the April 1 forecast. The break point of this category is just about 75,000 acre-feet and the forecasts are dropping towards this point. This occurred because the CBRFC made some adjustments in their forecast model. The reason we are seeing these drop offs from the last forecast on April 1st is that the CBRFC removed some of the snow from their snow model which directly translates to this forecast. This adjustment was made in response to the ASO flights flown over the East River and Taylor River which showed less snow in the Taylor River Basin. In this scenario the reservoir is forecasted to fill to just over 98,000 with a significant drop in inflows in June and July.

The second scenario is at the top of the dry hydrologic category and shows 73,000 acre-feet which is 78% of average and a decrease of 11,000 acre-feet from the April 1 forecast. In this scenario the reservoir is forecasted to fill to 96,600 acre-feet with a reduction in inflows after June. In this category there would be no spring peak rate, and flows would remain at 300 cfs through the months of June and July. The reservoir content is forecasted to reach 70,000 acre-feet in both scenarios.

Erik also discussed snowpack conditions in the Taylor River Basin, which is currently at 67% of normal, which is a sharp decline from the snowpack peak and indicates that SWE is melting quickly. This is another reason for the forecast dropping off. Also, snowfall in April in the Taylor Rive Basin fell short of the normal amounts for this time of year.

Mark Schumacher asked about the effects the proposed operations plan may have on agricultural users but since no changes are proposed until around the middle of May he felt that there should be sufficient water available for their needs.

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

David Gochis of Airborne Snow Observatories presented the latest snowpack information modelled from the data that was collected from the ASO snow survey on April 7th in the basin. He noted there have been significant snow losses mostly at mid and lower elevations due to snow temperature. The temperatures of upper elevation snowpack are still relatively cold, so this is not melting as quickly.

The current snowpack is estimated at 73,000 acre-feet which is a decline of 37,000 acre-feet from his previous report. This forecast has not changed much due to recent precipitation events. David noted that soil moisture has increased significantly, particularly at lower to mid-elevations. Soil moisture at higher elevations is currently in good shape which should lead to greater runoff efficiency as the snowpack starts to melt in those areas.

Daivd also said that the weather forecast for the next one to two weeks shows a continued stormy and cool pattern, which could also be favorable for maintaining snowpack and runoff efficiency. They are keeping an eye on this forecast as the cooler temperatures should help with sublimation and evaporation. David discussed the challenges and uncertainties in indexing snow sites together, particularly at lower to mid elevations. Ryan asked about the operational implications of the diminished forecast on the East River drainage, to which Eric responded that they could manage without risk of interference with peak flows.

Ernie Cockrell said there seemed to be a lot of variables in the information presented. He said that before the ASO flights were taken, there was a certain amount of snowpack registered by the SNOTEL sites then there was a drop off. He asked if the data that those sites were giving was in error at that point or did the warming trend give us a quicker melt off that was just going into the soil instead of as runoff. He also asked if the soil moisture content has come up, does that mean later melting is more likely to turn into runoff and is the model accounting for a more likely runoff in the amount entering into the reservoir.

David said that these are the right thread of processes. He said coming out of winter before this most recent melt event conditions were dry. Things have since moistened up with most occurring at lower and mid-elevations where there is a much deeper soil column and deeper alluviums. This can soak up a lot more moisture without producing much runoff. In the higher elevations the soil moisture take up is less and we will get more efficient runoff as a result. This efficiency should continue to increase as we keep getting topped off as long as we keep getting precipitation events. How much these soils can take up is unknown because there are variabilities in the sub-surface system in the basin.

IV. Preliminary TLUG Draft Operational Release Recommendations

Chair Don Sabrowski asked the TLUG representatives for their recommendations for reservoir operations. The consensus of the group to not consider any changes to the operations plan until the May 1 forecast is received. They will then have a better idea on the need to conserve water due to the diminished snowpack. The group also discussed the early run-off happening in the East River Basin and how this might impact release timing. In this area, they also decided to be cautious and wait for the next forecast.

V. Miscellaneous Matters

There were no miscellaneous matters.

VI. Citizens Comments

There were no Citizens' Comments

VII. Adjournment

The April 21, 2025 TLUG meeting was adjourned by Chairman Sabrowski at 9:36 a.m. The next TLUG meeting will be held on May 8, 2025 at 9:00 a.m.