

**MINUTES**  
**Taylor Local Users Group**  
**May 8, 2025, 9:00 a.m.**

**TLUG Attendees:**

TLUG Representatives Present:

Ryan Birdsey (Flatwater Recreation Interests via Zoom)  
Ernest Cockrell (Taylor Placer via Zoom)  
David Fisher (Property Owners via Zoom)  
Mark Schumacher (Boating Interests)  
Andy Spann (Irrigation Interests via Zoom)

TLUG Representatives Absent:

Don Sabrowski, TLUG Chair  
Roark Kiklevich (Wade Fishing Interests)

Other Attendees:

Sonja Chavez (UGRWCD)  
Beverly Richards (UGRWCD)  
Sue Uerling (UGRWCD)  
Giulio Del Piccolo (Colorado Parks and Wildlife)  
Patrick Plumley (Gunnison River Resident and Fishing Enthusiast)

By Zoom:

Erik Knight (USBR)  
Ed Warner (USBR)  
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)

**I. Introductions and Approval of Minutes**

In Chairman Don Sabrowski's absence, UGRWCD General Manager Sonja Chavez called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and all attendees were introduced. The minutes from the April 10<sup>th</sup> and April 21<sup>st</sup> TLUG meetings were presented for review. Mark Schumacher motioned and Ryan Birdsey seconded approval of the April 10, 2025 Meeting Minutes. The motion carried. After verifying the snowpack level listed in the April 21, 2025 Meeting Minutes, Mark Schumacher motioned and Ernie Cockrell seconded approval of the April 21, 2025 Meeting Minutes. The motion carried.

## **II. Upper Gunnison Basin May Water Supply Report - Beverly Richards**

Beverly presented the Taylor River year type calculations sheet which determines the volume levels for the year type categories of dry, average, and wet year types based on requirements from the stipulation. This is calculated using the actual inflow data provided by the Division of Water Resources. For 2024 the Dry Year upper limit is now 73,354 acre-feet and the five-year average is 73,642 acre-feet. The Average Year upper limit is 111,117 acre-feet and the five-year average is the same.

Beverly presented a water supply report for the basin. She discussed the decline in snowpack and stream gauge flows, and the need for precipitation to improve conditions. She noted that portions of the southwestern part of the state have moved into “extreme drought” conditions and much of the rest of the western half of the state has shown degradation in drought conditions. She reported that precipitation for most of Gunnison County is at 25-50 percent of average over the past 30 days. The Taylor River basin did receive a slight uptick in precipitation the first week of May. The Snow Water Equivalent has dropped from 14.2 inches in April to 4.4 inches in May, which is 45 percent of the average median for this time of year. All streamflows in the basin are currently lower than the historical average and more dry, warm weather is predicted for the short-term forecast.

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

Erik Knight, with the US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), provided information from the May 1st CBRFC forecast. The April to July runoff into Taylor Park Reservoir is now forecast to be 68,000 AF, which is just 72 percent of average. The May 1, 2025 runoff forecast shows a significant decrease of 16,000 AF compared to the April 1, 2025 forecast. This runoff forecast changes the year type from the Average Year category to the Dry Year category. In the Dry Year category, there is no requirement for a spring peak release. The end-of-October target content is now 68,000 AF. This preliminary operations plan shows the reservoir filling to a maximum seasonal content of 93,900 AF, an elevation of 9323.7 feet, which is 88 percent of full.

Releases from Taylor Park Dam are currently at 100 cfs and are scheduled to increase to 150 cfs on May 12<sup>th</sup> and then to 200 cfs on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 250 cfs on May 29<sup>th</sup> and then stay at 300 cfs June 3<sup>rd</sup> through August 1<sup>st</sup>. On August 2<sup>nd</sup> releases will ramp down to 275 cfs and then mid-August they will drop to 250 cfs and finally to 225 into September. Releases will continue to ramp down through September to reach the winter flow target of 83 cfs by end of October.

Erik noted that April really underperformed in terms of snowfall and that there is just 25 percent of snowpack remaining in the basin, according to the SNOTEL data. He suspects that the peak for runoff will be a little earlier this year, possibly the last week of May or first week of June, with temperatures expected to be above normal for the next couple of weeks.

Erik announced that he will be leaving the USBR at the end of the month and that Conor Felletter will be taking over his responsibilities. Conor has been training for the Taylor Operations reporting for the past couple of months. Erik said he will be available to help Conor and answer questions for a while following his departure. The TLUG representatives and UGRWCD staff expressed their deep appreciation for Erik's contributions over the years and noted that he will be greatly missed.

Ed Warner also announced his departure from the USBR effective May 30<sup>th</sup>. Ed, too, was thanked for his long-term service to the USBR and his help with Taylor operations. Both Ed and Erik were wished well by the group.

Ernie Cockrell asked if it would be possible for Erik to overlap data from a couple of previously “dry category” years, like 2022 and 2018, with the current forecast to be able to compare where releases were then and what the outcome was, as this might help the TLUG representatives determine where any additional cuts might be possible under the forecasted dry conditions for this year. Erik replied that he will work on assembling these graphs for the group.

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

David Gochis of Airborne Snow Observatories, Inc., presented the current snowpack situation in the Taylor Basin, highlighting the significant drop in snow water equivalent (SWE) totals. He mentioned that the ASO model may be melting snow a bit fast this year and that they have plans to get a plane in the air next week for a survey, which will provide more specific data on snowpack levels and predicted runoff.

The ASO forecasted runoff for April through July is around 85,000 acre feet, which is closer to the CBRFC's April 1st forecast. David also discussed the seasonal totals and the breakout for the three tributaries into Taylor Reservoir (Taylor River, Texas Creek and Willow Creek). Raquel Flinker of the Colorado River District asked for clarification on the differences between the forecasted runoff, since the ASO data is showing 84,600 acre-feet versus the 68,000 acre-feet forecasted by the CBRFC. Dave confirmed that the ASO's data is currently showing totals that more closely match the CBRFC's April first forecast. Dave said right now he suspects that the differences can be explained because the two models are relying on different data sources and the ASO model includes information that there is still some fairly good snowpack above the SNOTEL sites, which will be confirmed or disproved by the next ASO flight.

Dave noted that the ASO SNOTEL model relies on absolute volume of snowpack, while the CBRFC uses snowpack estimations indexed to the SNOTEL sites. David also presented the current snowpack temperatures, which are warmer than average across the basin. Dave did state that the ASO has plans to meet with the CBRFC to discuss the differences in their forecasts and to better understand how they are using the ASO data presented to them.

Dave also discussed the forecast for the East River's peak runoff and the impact this might have on the CBRFC's forecast for their model. He mentioned that the model might be

overestimating the early runoff pulse due to excess precipitation in the forecast. David also noted that the model will be improved next year by blending different ensemble averages to reduce sensitivity to individual weather forecasts. There was discussion about what the SNOTEL sites were showing for existing snowpack. Beverly Richards checked the current SNOTEL measurements, as did Dave, and it was confirmed that while some sites are still showing snowpack, others in the basin have completely melted out and all are down from the previous meeting and below the average median for this time of the year. Both Mark Schumacher and Ryan Birdsey said they have observed that the snow has melted out along the Taylor.

Dave reported that the ASO model is not currently assimilating streamflow data, but they will be monitoring the comparison between the model's predictions and actual streamflow observations after the next ASO flight.

## **V. Preliminary TLUG Draft Operational Release Recommendations**

Sonja Chavez asked the TLUG representatives for their preliminary recommendations for releases, and the responses were as follows:

Ryan Birdsey – He did not feel there was a need for any adjustments to USBR's recommendations right now but that they may want to adjust releases in September to extend the rafting/boating/irrigating season if possible.

Andy Spann – He felt there was not much they could change right now, but that they might want to conserve some water in June by starting flows at 275 cfs, even though this would not be ideal for irrigators.

Mark Schumacher – He suggested that no changes be made at this time, that the group should wait for ASO data and June forecast.

David Fisher – He agreed with the others and said he does not have any further comments at this time.

Ernie Cockrell – He said that he did not have anything to add but did offer that perhaps TLUG should “hold” a date later in May to have another TLUG meeting if the ASO flight results in significant changes to the current forecasts. Sonja offered that the ASO information would be emailed to the group when available.

A “hold” was put on the calendar for another possible meeting in May on Thursday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> at 9 a.m. The June meeting was also scheduled for Friday, June 6<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m.

## **VI. Miscellaneous Matters**

Giulio Del Piccolo of Colorado Parks and Wildlife was asked if he had any update on the status of Spring Creek Reservoir. He replied “no” that they had not been able to get up there to check on the reservoir due to access.

Taylor Dam Operator Rory Birdsey was asked if the gate issue/transducer at Taylor Park Reservoir has been fixed. He reported that they are waiting for a custom part to arrive to fix the vibration issues, which causes the automatic bypass gate to not operate correctly. Rory is still manually adjusting the releases until they can implement the fix.

## **VII. Citizens Comments**

There were no Citizens’ Comments

## **VIII. Adjournment**

The May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025 TLUG Meeting was adjourned by Sonja Chavez at 10:15 a.m.