

MINUTES
Taylor Local Users Group
June 6, 2025, 9:00 a.m.

TLUG Attendees:

TLUG Representatives Present:

Don Sabrowski, TLUG Chair
Ernest Cockrell (Taylor Placer via Zoom)
David Fisher (Property Owners via Zoom)
Roark Kiklevich (Wade Fishing Interests via Zoom)
Mark Schumacher (Boating Interests)
Andy Spann (Irrigation Interests)

TLUG Representatives Absent:

Ryan Birdsey (Flatwater Recreation Interests)

Other Attendees:

Beverly Richards (UGRWCD)
Sue Uerling (UGRWCD)
Giulio Del Piccolo (Colorado Parks and Wildlife)

Attendees Via Zoom:

Rory Birdsey (Taylor Reservoir Dam Operator)
Dustin Brown (Scenic River Tours)
Dennis Cakebread (Wilder on the Taylor HOA)
Reece Carpenter (US Bureau of Reclamation)
Sonja Chavez (UGRWCD)
Pete Dunda (Taylor River Homeowner)
Conor Felletter (USBR)
Doug Forshagen (Crystal Creek Homeowners)
David Gochis (Airborne Snow Observatory)
Erik Knight (formerly with US Bureau of Reclamation)
Bryan Moore (US Geological Survey)

I. Approval of Minutes

Chairman Don Sabrowski called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. The minutes from the May 8th TLUG meeting were presented for review. Mark Schumacher motioned and Andy Spann seconded approval of the May 8, 2025 Meeting Minutes. The motion carried.

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

Beverly presented a water supply report for the basin. She discussed the lack of snowpack at the SNOTEL sites and noted that, according to the Division of Water Resources stream gauge hydrographs, it is possible that peak flows were reached on June 3rd at most sites throughout the basin. She also reported that the peak measurements so far this season are well below the historical averages.

After the previous warm up in late May, temperatures dropped back down and there was some precipitation at the beginning of the month that could help bring streamflows back up some, but it does not look promising that the flows will get back up to peak that occurred on June 3rd of the historical averages. Beverly presented graphs comparing peak dates and amounts for different river gauges, and most are trending close to 2021 levels, which was another dry year.

She also said there continues to be degradation in drought conditions of one to two class levels and that the prediction is that drought conditions will persist throughout the summer. In fact, most of the western half of the state is now showing degraded drought conditions. On the bright side, she said portions of Saguache County in the District are showing 300 percent of normal precipitation for this time of year. The weather forecast predicts some precipitation for the short-term, so hopefully this might help with current dry conditions.

III. CBRFC Water Supply Update and USBR Model Forecast – Conor Felletter, USBR

Conor Felletter introduced himself and noted that he has taken on the responsibilities of Erik Knight and Susan Berry at the US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR). His background is primarily in modeling and he grew up in Grand Junction, so he is glad to be back on the Western slope. His office is based out of Durango, and he hopes to come in person to a future TLUG meeting.

Conor presented data from the June 1st CBRFC forecast. The April to July runoff forecast into Taylor Park Reservoir has decreased by 3,000 acre-feet from the mid-May forecast. Based on this forecast, the forecasted runoff for this time period is 60,000 acre-feet, which is 64% of average.

He explained that despite recent rain, hot temperatures in late May likely contributed to the decrease in forecasted inflows. Conor said the projected storage in Taylor Park Reservoir is expected to reach a maximum seasonal content of approximately 90,700 acre-feet by the third week of June. Based upon the current operational release plan, the October 31st content would be 63,000 acre-feet of storage, which would provide a buffer of 3,000 acre-feet above the minimum storage level outlined in the decree for a dry year that water users could work with the remainder of the season.

There was discussion about the statement about winter flow rate calculation during a dry year and Ernie Cockrell confirmed that according to the stipulation, there is a formula to reduce

releases at 2.5 acre-feet per 1,000 acre-feet of storage with a minimum winter release of 50 cfs. Erik Knight noted that this would change the winter release flow noted in the draft plan from 75 cfs to 77 cfs if the end of year content were 63,000 acre-feet.

The current draft operational release plan provided by Conor shows Taylor Park Dam currently releasing 200 cfs with a scheduled increase to 300 cfs on June 16th where it would remain through August 1st. Releases will then continue to ramp down through September to reach the winter flow target of 75 cfs by the end of October.

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

David Gochis of Airborne Snow Observatories, Inc., presented the WRF model forecast created after their most recent ASO survey conducted on May 20 and 21, 2025. David noted that cooler temperatures, precipitation and even some significant snowfall at the higher elevations resulted in model forecasted runoff in the amount of 84,000 acre feet which is 20,000 acre feet higher than the CBRFC's forecast. David said that ASO's ongoing monitoring of snowpack using Sentinel satellite imagery shows that there is still significant snow coverage in the higher elevations of the Taylor Basin, which will continue to contribute to runoff once the sun comes out and temperatures rise. He surmised that we may not have yet hit peak runoff.

Roark Kiklevich commented that he has driven up past Taylor Reservoir and up to Crested Butte and he did not observe much snowpack left, even at higher elevations.

David said that ASO will be preparing weekly reports on the snowpack and runoff and will be happy to share those with the TLUG representatives. He also agreed to provide a new shot of satellite snowpack on the mountains in the absence of cloud cover.

V. Preliminary TLUG Draft Operational Release Recommendations

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

Mark Schumacher – He noted that the rafting companies are struggling a little bit on the Upper Taylor but that the Gunnison River was fine. However, in order to conserve some water for use later, he recommended that releases should go to 250 cfs on June 7th, 275 cfs on June 15th and 300 cfs on July 1st. Dustin Brown of Scenic River Tours agreed.

Andy Spann – He felt the irrigators were in pretty good shape right now and agreed that it would benefit them to go to 300 cfs by July 1st. He was in support of Mark Schumacher's suggestion. Chairman Sabrowski added that at Wilder, they have a full ditch thanks in part to the Spring Creek inflows.

Roark Kiklevich – He felt it is important to be as conservative as possible right now, so he was in favor of Mark Schumacher's suggestion as a good place to start.

Ernie Cockrell – He appreciated that Mark and Andy were willing to cut back some on the releases for now and said he would support Mark’s recommendation.

David Fisher – He agreed with the others and said he thinks it is a good idea to maintain some storage for later in the season.

VI. Miscellaneous Matters

Giulio Del Piccolo of Colorado Parks and Wildlife reported that he did not have the opportunity to find out the status of storage at Spring Creek. He will check with his staff and send an email to Sonja Chavez with their response

Taylor Dam Operator Rory Birdsey was asked if the gate and transducer issues at Taylor Park Reservoir had been fixed. He reported that they have received the part and will be installing it soon. In the meantime, he is still manually adjusting the releases and he said this has been going pretty smoothly. He agreed to notify the group if there will be any significant changes in the flow when they install the new part.

VII. Citizens Comments

There were no Citizens’ Comments

VIII. Next Meeting and Adjournment

The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, July 10th at 8:30 a.m. Chairman Sabrowski adjourned the June 6th, 2025 TLUG Meeting at 10:10 a.m.