

MINUTES
Taylor Local Users Group
August 5, 2025, 8:30 a.m.

TLUG Attendees:

TLUG Representatives Present:

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

Other Attendees:

Beverly Richards (UGRWCD)
Sonja Chavez (UGRWCD)
Conor Felletter (USBR)
Giulio Del Piccolo (Colorado Parks and Wildlife)

Attendees Via Zoom:

Ernest D. Cockrell (Taylor Placer)
Dustin Brown (Scenic River Tours)
Jay Whitacre (Irwin Guides)
David Gochis (Airborne Snow Observatory)
Erik Knight (formerly with US Bureau of Reclamation)
Rory Birdsey (Taylor Reservoir Dam Operator)
Doug Forshagen (Crystal Creek Homeowners)

I. Approval of Minutes

Chairman Don Sabrowski called the August 5th TLUG meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The minutes from the July 10th TLUG meeting were presented for review. Mark Schumacher asked for a change in his statement under Operational Release Recommendations. He asked for the following to be included: *This would allow certainty to rafters and fisherman and will help commercial outfitters with bookings for the remainder of the season.* Mark Schumacher motioned and Roark Kiklevich seconded approval of the July 10, 2025 Meeting Minutes with the suggested change. The motion carried.

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

Beverly presented a water supply report for the basin for July. Her report highlighted the continuing deterioration of drought conditions in Gunnison County with 44% of the county now experiencing extreme drought conditions. She also discussed the lack of precipitation over the past thirty days and current poor soil moisture conditions throughout the basin. Beverly also noted that current streamflows throughout the basin are low but closer to the average streamflow typical for this time of year which is reflective of baseflow conditions.

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

Conor presented data from the August 1st CBRFC forecast. The April to July runoff forecast for Taylor Park Reservoir has decreased by 600 acre-feet from the July forecast. The final observed inflow volume for the April to July time period is 61,200 acre-feet which is 65% of average. Conor also said that the forecasted inflows for August and September have decreased by 2,000 acre-feet from the previous report.

He outlined the proposed operations plan, which includes maintaining a 300 cfs release until August 15th, reducing releases to 250 cfs on August 16th, ramping down to 225 cfs on September 1st, and to 200 cfs by October 1st. Based on the final observed inflow volume, the winter releases will be maintained at 76 cfs.

Based upon the current operational release plan, the October 31st content would be 61,481 acre-feet of storage, which would provide a buffer of approximately 500 acre-feet above the minimum storage level target outlined in the decree for a dry year that water users could work with the remainder of the season.

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

David Gochis of Airborne Snow Observatories, Inc., presented the WRF/ASO ensemble model forecast. David noted that the current inflow forecasts for August and September were relatively close to the amount forecasted by the CBRFC, just 4,500 acre-feet higher than the model is forecasting. The model forecast shows that 8,900 acre-feet will occur in August, and 6,800 acre-feet of inflow will occur in September. The East River above Almont is forecasted to have 22,500 acre-feet of inflows with the majority coming the mainstem of the East River and a contribution of only 6,600 acre-feet from the Slate River.

David said baseflows in the Upper Taylor River Basin continue to drop and the August-September inflow forecast for the tributaries are currently at 9.2 kaf for the Taylor River above Taylor Reservoir, 4.0 kaf for Texas Creek, and 2.0 kaf for Willow Creek flowing into the reservoir. David also said he gathered soil moisture data from the SnoLite stations, and all the sites had fairly low values. The recent storm near the Trail Creek SnoLite station provided some moisture but this did not penetrate to the deeper moisture probe. There was

some refresh occurring at the Cottonwood Pass and Mirror Lake sites, but conditions continue to remain dry.

David said that conditions in the model tended to be wetter this year, but the current forecasts are consistent with the information provided by Conor and the CBRFC.

V. Preliminary TLUG Draft Operational Release Recommendations

At this time Don Sabrowski asked Giulio Del Piccolo to provide an update on the status of dam repairs at Spring Creek Reservoir. Giulio indicated that they are currently still under a storage restriction of 28 feet and trying to maintain at 24 feet right now. Challenging to keep at 28 feet due to variable inflow. CPW is currently working with an engineering firm to study options for addressing issues at Spring Creek Reservoir dam including base options of fixing the dam in its current state, cut dam down in size to make safe or remove the dam entirely. There could be others proposed. Study should be complete around March 2026 and a preferred alternative selected, but folks should count on 3-4 years before issue is completely addressed. For more questions, folks can contact Jen Sveboda of CPW.

Giulio noted that he looked temperatures over the past month have been on average 62.8 degrees. Roark Kiklevich noted that these average temperatures only really occurred due to cooler weather conditions that came in, but that temperatures were very warm a number of days and closer to temperatures that should be of concern for the fishery. Giulio indicated that consistent with input provided by Dan Brauch, the optimal date for having stable / unchanging flows for the brown trout spawning so that the eggs are not left high and dry, is October 15th.

Ryan Birdsey asked what the ramp down schedule was for October: Flows will be decreased from 200 cfs to 175 cfs on October 3rd, down to 150 cfs on October 5th, to 125 cfs on October 8th, and down to 100 cfs on October 11th. The releases will remain at 100 cfs (according to current plan) through October 16th when releases will be reduced to the winter flow rate of 76 cfs.

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

Mark Schumacher suggested that the release remain at 250 cfs through September 15 rather than dropping to 225 cfs on September 1st. He also would like the releases to remain at 300 through August. This would drop the end of year content amount from 61,481 acre-feet to approximately 60,800 acre-feet which is above the 60,000 acre-feet target. These proposed releases could be reevaluated in September. Ernie reminded Mark that the end of year target is actually 61,000 AF and not 60,000 AF.

Conversation continued about the possibility of keeping flows at 250 cfs through September 4th when the group meets again in order to provide flows over Labor Day weekend. The only exception to this proposed flow release would be if the mid-month forecast shows deterioration in inflows in which case the TLUG would meet on the 20th at 10:30 a.m.

Ernie Cockrell said that he is comfortable staying at 250 cfs through September 4th when we meet again unless our unofficial mid-month forecast shows continued deterioration in conditions.

Andy Spann said he would really like to see releases remain at 250 cfs through September 15th but he understands the uncertainty in the forecast. He agreed to the releases as proposed and a reevaluation at our September 4 meeting.

Ryan Birdsey said he is supportive of the operational plan as discussed subject to the mid-month forecast and our September 4th meeting date.

David Fisher – He said he had no additional comments and supports the proposed plan as presented.

Roark Kiklevich agreed to the proposed operational plan as discussed and emphasized the importance of the mid-month forecast and the importance of the flows in August to reduce stream temperatures for the fishery.

In summary it was the consensus and recommendation of the group that flows be dropped from 300 cfs to 250 cfs on August 15th where they would remain through September 4th subject to a mid-month August forecast (Tentative meeting hold date of August 20th). Conor will provide the unofficial August 15th mid-month forecast prior to August 20th (10:30 a.m.) meeting hold date and time. The next official regular meeting will be held on September 4th at 8:30 a.m. in order to make any changes necessary following the September 1 forecast.

Mark Schumacher motioned and Roark Kiklevich seconded approval of the operations plan as described above. The motion carried.

VI. Miscellaneous Matters

Giulio Del Piccolo provided an update on the Spring Creek Reservoir. He said they continue to evaluate the storage restrictions currently in place at the reservoir. They have been maintaining the water level to 24 feet based on those restrictions and this amount is variable due to inflows and leakage. CPW is currently in the process of requesting bids for an engineering study to determine what options are available to fix the issues with the dam in the future. This could include fixing the dam, cutting the size of the dam down, or removing the dam entirely. They hope to have the study completed by March 2026 and will then choose an option to implement. CPW is anticipating that this will involve a 3 to 4 year timeline for completion of the project depending upon the option chosen. Giulio did not know if or when there would be a public comment period for the project, but the current bid process is only for the study component. He also said that Janice Svoboda or Jerimiah Runnel would be the day to day contact for information about the reservoir.

Rory Birdsey said that the power plant has been steady for the last few weeks. There was a power outage but the switches on the bypass releases from the dam have been replaced and are now functioning properly.

Sonja Chavez said that the District has been assessing gap weather radar sites. All the possible sites identified with good coverage do not include the Taylor River basin. The group we have been in discussion with will present their information at the September board meeting. She also said Ari Yamaguchi has scheduled a tour of the hydropower facilities at Taylor Reservoir for October 27, 2025 if anyone is interested in attending.

Sonja has been working with Ernie Cockrell on issues he has been seeing on the Taylor River. It is possible some of these issues have occurred due to avalanches that occurred a few years ago. The sediment associated with the avalanches is impacting macroinvertebrates. They have discussed commissioning a study to look at the issues and this could involve a change to the flushing flows to move the sediment better. The funding for this study could come from the District's grant program or from the CFP program at the Colorado River District.

VII. Citizens Comments

There were no Citizens' Comments

VIII. Next Meeting and Adjournment

There is a tentative meeting scheduled for Wednesday, August 20, 2025 at 10:30 a.m. to discuss the mid-month information that will be provided by Conor Felletter. This meeting will be teleconference only.

The next TLUG meeting was scheduled for Thursday, September 4, 2025 at 8:30 a.m. Chairman Sabrowski adjourned the August 5, 2025 TLUG Meeting at 9:43 a.m.