

MINUTES
Taylor Local Users Group
April 7, 10:00 a.m.

TLUG Attendees:

TLUG Representatives Present:

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

Other Attendees:

Sonja Chavez (UGRWCD)
Jules Iovino (UGRWCD)
Beverly Richards (UGRWCD)
Sue Uerling (UGRWCD)
Dustin Brown (Scenic River Tours)
Julio Del Piccolo (Colorado Parks and Wildlife)

Attendees Via Zoom:

David Gochis (Airborne Snow Observatory)
Dennis Cakebread (Taylor at Wilder Resident)
Reece Carpenter (US Bureau of Reclamation)
Conor Felletter (US Bureau of Reclamation)
Caleb Foy (Colorado River Water Conservation District)
Andrew Limbach (US Bureau of Reclamation)
Ryan Unterreiner (Colorado Parks and Wildlife)
Rory Birdsey (Uncompahgre Valley Water Users)
Doug Forshagen (Crystal Creek HOA)
Ches Russell (Scenic River Tours)
Pete Dunda (Taylor River Homeowner)

I. Approval of Minutes

Don Sabrowski called the meeting to order. The minutes from the March 9, 2026, TLUG meeting were presented for review. Roark Kiklevich moved and Andy Spann seconded approval of the minutes. The motion carried.

II. Upper Gunnison Basin Water Supply Report – Beverly Richards

Beverly presented PowerPoint slides showing the current drought conditions in the Upper Gunnison Basin, highlighting the continued degradation and increase in the intensity categories of extreme and exceptional drought across the state, with 73 percent of Gunnison County now in extreme or exceptional drought. She noted that temperatures in March were above normal by 9 to 15 degrees and precipitation year-to-date was only 12.5 inches. Streamflows to date showed a high of 527 cfs in the East River and 677 cfs in the Gunnison River back on March 27th, so there is the possibility we have seen peak of runoff, which would be approximately 30-45 days early according to historical averages. The SWE bumped up a little bit following the precipitation and snowfall that occurred on April 2nd and 3rd, but it has now dropped again and is at historic lows.

III. CBRFC Water Supply Update and USBR Model Forecast – Andrew Limbach, USBR

The Taylor Park Reservoir April 1, 2026, forecast decreased by 6,000 acre-feet since the March 1 forecast. This was due to abnormally warm temperatures and below normal precipitation. Andrew Limbach (Reclamation) presented the updated forecast for Taylor Park Reservoir showing a decrease from 46,000 to 40,000 acre-feet. Conor Felletter explained that in order to meet the 60,000 acre-foot end-of-year storage target, flow releases from Taylor Park Reservoir would need to be reduced through July. General Manager Sonja Chavez added clarification for the group regarding her email explaining that the 60,000 acre-foot target should always be used as the goal per the 2020 Taylor Amended Stipulation and it should be the starting point for annual release discussion. It can be modified in drought years like this year if the Four Parties agree to go below that floor. She did note her concerns about potential impacts on winter fish flows and the subsequent year's operations as this floor was established based upon modeling studies around the ability for reservoir storage to recover each year.

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

David Gochis reported that the ASO model shows forecasted April through July runoff at 53,000 acre-feet, but that this was not inclusive of the East River survey they flew yesterday nor the Taylor flight scheduled for later this week. Although it has not been an “extreme dust year,” he did say that the remaining snowpack has aged rapidly leading to an accelerated snow melt process. He said information from the SnoLite station are showing Italian Creek at 41 inches of snowpack, Cottonwood at 34 inches of snowpack, and Mirror Lake at 9 inches of snowpack remaining. He noted that even with the precipitation last week, the net effect on SWE was basically a wash as the warm temperatures quickly melted the new snow. He noted that they are seeing steep decays of soil moisture that usually are not seen until June and current streamflows hitting maximum values about a full month earlier than normal.

V. Preliminary TLUG Draft Operational Release Recommendations.

The TLUG representatives weighed in on proposed operations in the USBR report. Mark Schumacher noted that he was glad the group chose to act last month on Ernie Cockrell's recommendation of keeping releases low until May to conserve water for later this year. Andy Spann wondered about possibly delaying increased releases until later in May to conserve more water due to declining conditions. Mark Schumacher said that the rafting community would agree to this as it was likely that they would not be able to do their raft guide training on the Upper Taylor with the low levels anyway.

There was discussion that it would be helpful to look at historical storage and winter flow data during low water years, if those records are available. The USBR was able to provide the data as requested. Andrew stated that in 2002 the end of year storage was approximately 41,000 acre-feet and the winter flows were 53 to 55 cfs. In 1977 the reservoir content at the end of the year was also around 42,000 acre-feet but the winter flows were steady at 75 cfs.

David Fisher said for homeowners, watering lawns more efficiently should be encouraged, and he offered to contact the CSU extension office to get their suggestions on conservation. Ryan Birdsey reported that there is no ice on the Reservoir and that this occurred "very, very early." He agreed that if any more water could be saved in April and May, this might be a benefit to the irrigators and boating community later in the season.

Taylor Park Dam Operator Rory Birdsey was asked about how the GCEA's hydropower operations at the dam were going. Rory said that except for a minor glitch in March, the system has been operating correctly.

Julio Del Piccolo with Colorado Parks and Wildlife reported that they performed their kokanee salmon release three weeks early based on current warmer, dryer conditions and that it went well. He noted that 3.2 million eggs were harvested for hatchery rearing and that there was a big jump this year in gill lice reported. He said that CPW is also concerned about an increase in harmful algal blooms in Blue Mesa Reservoir if the hot and dry conditions persist through the next several months.

Ernie Cockrell moved and Mark Schumacher seconded the motion to keep releases at 60 cfs through May 15th with the next increase on May 16th to 100 cfs. The motion carried.

V. Miscellaneous Matters

Sonja reported that she was on a call recently with the National Park Service and CPW and they mentioned that they intercepted a piece of reservoir equipment for measuring surface water evaporation that was brought from Lake Powell and infested with mussels before it was put in Blue Mesa Reservoir by Reclamation field staff. She noted that it is going to be very important for everyone to sanitize all recreational and construction equipment used in

water bodies. Julio Del Piccolo confirmed that the Taylor Reservoir boat inspection station will be open Friday through Monday, April 10th to May 1st and then every day beginning May 1st from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sonja invited everyone to attend a public meeting hosted by the District and the Division of Water Resources on Tuesday, April 14th at 5 p.m. in the North Ballroom at Western Colorado University Student Union. She also encouraged everyone to register for the Colorado River District's "State of the River" presentation and dinner on Wednesday, May 13th at 6 p.m. at Western Colorado University, North Ballroom. A registration link is posted on the home page of the District's website at www.ugrwcd.org.

VI. Citizen Comments

There were no comments received.

VII. Next Meeting Date

The next TLUG meeting was scheduled for May 6, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.

VIII. Adjournment

The April 7th TLUG meeting was adjourned at 11:05 a.m.