

Taylor Park Reservoir and Taylor/Gunnison River Local Users Group Process¹

The following is a description of the process that the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District uses to develop a plan of reservoir releases and flows in the Taylor River. The releases are managed to achieve irrigation, stream fishery, reservoir fishery, rafting, and flood control benefits. The District and its citizens support all of these uses.

I. Background.

The Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District is one of four signatories to the Taylor Park Reservoir Operation and Storage Exchange Agreement that was executed in August 1975. The “75 agreement” forms the basis under which the release patterns from Taylor Park Reservoir are determined each year. The other three parties to the agreement are the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the Colorado River Water Conservation District, and the Uncompahgre Valley Water Users Association. Each year, the four signatory parties to the agreement participate in an annual meeting (usually in May) and jointly adopt a plan for reservoir releases for the upcoming year.

Each spring, and as necessary throughout the summer, the UGRWCD seeks input and direction from local users of the Taylor River, Taylor Park Reservoir, and the main stem of the Gunnison River above Blue Mesa as to how the reservoir operations can best be optimized for stream fishery, reservoir fishery, irrigation, and rafting and boating purposes in the upper Gunnison basin.

II. Local Users Group.

One means of obtaining this input is by holding a meeting at which a named representative of each group of users is in attendance. The meeting participants are asked to reach a consensus recommendation to the UGRWCD board in order to bring to bear their combined practical experience, to balance as much as possible the potential differing desires of each group of users, and further to prevent any one group from dominating the selection of the recommended flows which accrue to the benefit of all.

III. Local Users Group Recommendation.

The consensus that is developed is presented to the Board of Directors of the Upper Gunnison District at a regular meeting for approval. The Board considers the input from the local users group, and input from staff and any interested members of the public in adopting the District’s recommended flows. The Board may accept or modify the recommendations of the Local Users Group. The District’s recommended flows, when

¹ This description of the process was adopted March 10, 2005. It is a revision and refinement of processes originally adopted by the Board of Directors of the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District on March 22, 2004 and February 20, 1997, which drew upon Taylor Park Reservoir Operating Objectives adopted April 21, 1993, and actions of the Board of Directors on May 26, 1992.

formalized, are carried forward by staff and the Board leadership to the annual four signatory parties' meeting.

IV. Procedural Points:

A. At the first regular meeting of the Board in a calendar year, or as soon thereafter as practicable, the Board, or the President of the Board in the absence of action by the Board, shall appoint or reappoint for two (2) year terms five (5) citizen members to the Local Users Group as follows: in even years,

- i. One member representing the rafting/boating interests on the Taylor River and/or Gunnison River main stem above Blue Mesa Reservoir, and
- ii. One member representing the flat water recreational interests in and around Taylor Park Reservoir, and

in odd years,

- iii. One member representing irrigation users along the Taylor River and Gunnison River main stem above Blue Mesa Reservoir, and
- iv. One member representing wade fishermen along the Taylor River and/or Gunnison main stem above Blue Mesa Reservoir, and
- v. One member representing property interests along the Taylor River and/or Gunnison main stem above Blue Mesa Reservoir

All persons appointed shall consent to serve, be residents within the District and experienced and knowledgeable about river conditions along the Taylor and Gunnison Rivers, and shall be notified in writing of their appointment.

B. Prior to the appointments, the District shall advertise the openings and request letters of interest. At a minimum, advertisement of the openings will occur at least a month in advance of the appointments by publication of the openings in the local newspaper(s) and posting on the District's website. To help in the selection process, the Board will request that such letters include the reason for the individual's interest and the Local Users Group that the individual proposes to represent. The Board will also consider letters of support or nomination from user groups of interested individuals.

C. In addition to the five members appointed above, the Taylor River (Div. 4) Board member from the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District shall serve as moderator for all Local Users Group meetings and shall formally report the decisions of the Local Users Group to the entire Board. If the Division 4 Board member is unavailable or as otherwise

directed by the Board, District staff shall attend all the meetings and shall formally report on those meetings to the entire Board. A representative from the Colorado Division of Wildlife may also be invited by the District to participate as a technical advisor to the members. None of these individuals will be voting members of the Local Users Group.

- D. As soon as practicable after the annual BOR April 1 forecasted runoff flows for the Gunnison basin, but before the regularly scheduled April meeting of the Board of Directors of the UGRWCD, the staff of the UGRWCD shall:
 - i. Call, upon seven days notice, a meeting of the Local Users Group for the purposes of developing a consensus flow recommendation to the UGRWCD board, and
 - ii. Forward the April 1 forecasted runoff to all Local Users Group members, and
 - iii. Prepare and forward preliminary recommended flows, developed from Bureau of Reclamation projected flows, as a beginning framework for the Local Users Group discussion.

- E. At the conclusion of the April Local Users Group meeting, the decisions and recommendations of the Local Users Group shall be promptly reported to the UGRWCD Board for their review, consideration, and action at the regularly scheduled April board meeting. The Board may adopt or modify the recommendation and shall finalize a flow recommendation, which shall be carried forward to the four parties' annual meeting.

- F. This process may be repeated monthly, as necessary, only at the call of any member of the Local Users Group, or any three members of the Board of Directors of the Upper Gunnison Water Conservancy District, subject, however, to the understanding that the UGRWCD is but one of four parties to the 75 agreement and further modifications to agreed annual release schedules may be difficult to obtain.

Taylor Park Reservoir Operating Objectives.²

- V. To operate Taylor Park Reservoir to achieve fishery benefits in the reservoir and downstream between November 1 and March 31 by maintaining a stable release pattern in the Taylor River below Taylor Park Dam.
- VI. To operate Taylor Park Reservoir for early season irrigation purposes so as to provide adequate flow support and protection for the Gunnison River and to provide fishery benefits in the reservoir and downstream by maintaining a

² These objectives, as adopted and approved by the Board of Directors of the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District, were adapted from operating objectives originally prepared by Tyler Martineau and approved April 21, 1993.

target flow in the Taylor River at Taylor Park Dam between April 1 and June 15. Adjustments in reservoir releases will be made on an as-needed basis depending on spring runoff conditions to avoid downstream flooding and to avoid reservoir spills.

- VII. To operate Taylor Park Reservoir for irrigation, and for fishery and boating purposes downstream by maintaining a target flow in the Taylor River at Taylor Park Dam between June 16 and June 30 and between July 1 and July 31.
- VIII. To operate Taylor Park Reservoir for fishery and boating purposes downstream by maintaining a target flow in the Taylor River at Taylor Park Dam between August 1 and August 31.
- IX. To operate Taylor Park Reservoir for fishery and boating purposes in the reservoir by maintaining the reservoir water surface elevation at appropriate reservoir levels between June 15 and August 31, while recognizing the need to preserve operational flexibility to achieve lower reservoir water surface elevation when needed for flood control purposes, to avoid reservoir spills, or to meet downstream water supply needs.
- X. To operate Taylor Park Reservoir for irrigation purposes and for fishery and recreational benefits in the reservoir and downstream by maintaining a target flow in the Taylor River as measured in the Taylor River at Taylor Park Dam between September 1 and October 15.
- XI. To operate Taylor Park Reservoir so as to reach the target flow to be maintained throughout the winter in the Taylor River at Taylor Park Dam by October 16 for stream fishery purposes. Flows from the dam would be ramped down at 50 cfs or less per day so that the wintertime target is reached by October 16.
- XII. To operate Taylor Park reservoir to achieve fishery benefits in the reservoir and downstream between October 16 and October 31 by maintaining a stable release pattern in the Taylor River below Taylor Park Dam.
- XIII. To operate Taylor Park Reservoir to avoid rapid fluctuations in the release pattern from the reservoir and resultant fluctuations in the water surface elevation of Taylor Park Reservoir to thereby protecting reservoir ice for winter recreation, protecting the reservoir fishery, and to protect fishing and boating activities year-round.