Great Salt Lake Strategic Plan Released

January 16, 2024

The Great Salt Lake Commissioner's Office has released the state of Utah's first strategic plan to get the Great Salt Lake to a healthy range and sustain it. In November 2022, the lake fell to a new record low level. During the 2023 Legislative General Session, HB491 (https://le.utah.gov/~2023/bills/static/HB0491.html) was passed, creating the Office of the Great Salt Lake Commissioner and required the preparation of a strategic plan applying "a holistic approach that balances the diverse interests related to the health of the Great Salt Lake…."

"The plan represents an initial strategy to more effectively protect the lake while balancing the other ecological, economic and societal interests surrounding the lake," Commissioner Brian Steed said. "Restoring the lake to a healthy range is not a one-year, one-policy, one-constituency solution. It will take a coordinated, data-driven approach so decision-makers can evaluate tradeoffs and balance competing interests."

The lake is a dynamic system, and its management must also be dynamic. The plan will be revisited regularly and adjusted to reflect the latest data and meet new challenges and opportunities. The strategy includes short-, medium- and long-term actions.

As outlined in HB491, the Great Salt Lake Strategic Plan helps ensure coordination of the work taking place among the many stakeholders (https://greatsaltlake.utah.gov/management-partners) who work on lake issues and calls for:

- Coordinating the efforts of a wide variety of agencies and stakeholders and ensuring robust public engagement on issues related to the lake
- Utilizing the best available science and data when making decisions that impact the lake
- Getting more water to the lake and ensuring a sustainable water supply while balancing competing needs, including human health and quality of life, a healthy ecosystem and economic development
- Conserving water across different sectors (M&I, industrial and agricultural), including quantification of water savings and shepherding saved water to the lake
- Protecting air and water quality

The release of the Great Salt Lake Strategic Plan is just the beginning. The hard work of implementing the plan builds off the work the state and others have already begun. As the plan states on page 15, “the actions identified in the plan’s first year largely build upon initiatives, partnerships, and programs that have already begun to help the Great Salt Lake. The short-term actions are designed to provide a foundation and guidance for longer term strategies and actions.” The plan also calls for additional detailed planning efforts to ensure enough water gets to the lake over the next 30 years and to maximize the investments that the Legislature has made for the benefit of the lake and everyone who relies upon it.

“Striking the right balance for the Great Salt Lake is no small task, especially among the pressures of continued growth, sustained drought and higher temperatures that threaten to increase demand and shrink available water supplies even further,” Steed said. “It will take all of us working together to protect and sustain the lake.”

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Learn More (https://greatsaltlake.utah.gov/great-salt-lake-strategic-plan-2)

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