

Jordan River Commission Technical Advisory Committee

February 15, 2024 | 2:00 p.m.

Meeting Location

This is a virtual meeting conducted via Zoom, with an anchor location at the Jordan River Commission office.

Meeting Attendees

Technical Advisory Committee Members

Marian Rice, Chair, Associate Director- *Peak Water Sustainability Engine (University of Utah)*
Gina Grandpre, Vice Chair, Senior Planner- *Saratoga Springs*
Chris Cline, Past Chair, *Retired Conservation Biologist*
Addy Valdez, *Conservation Biologist- Utah Lake Authority*
Ali Avery, *Long Range Planner- North Salt Lake*
Dan Potts, *Aquatic Ecologist- Salt Lake Fish and Game Foundation*
Eric McCulley, *Project Coordinator- Utah Reclamation Mitigation Conservation Commission*
Hugh Van Wagonen, *Active Transportation Planner-Wasatch Front Regional Council*
Laura Haskell, *Jordan River Basin Area Specialist- Division of Water Resources*
Matt Ryan, *Community Planner- Wasatch Front Regional Council*
Michele Rehbein, *Education Specialist- Salt Lake Mosquito Abatement District*
Nathan Page, *Grant Administrator- Riverton*
Sam Braeggar, *Deputy Director- Utah Lake Authority*
Sandy Wingert, *Environmental Scientist- Utah Division of Water Quality*
Todd Taylor, *Planner- Draper*
Tori Bird, *Conservation Action Coordinator- Utah's Hogle Zoo*

Commission Staff

Soren Simonsen, *Executive Director*
Rachel Turk, *Communications & Outreach Manager*
Julie Williams, *Event & Volunteer Manager*
Ren Griffeth, *Administration, Grant & Research Specialist*

Visitors and Guests

Anthony Baimont, *Parks Project Manager- South Salt Lake*
Ben Buys, *Executive Director- Utah Fairpark Corporation*
Isaac Gomez, *Engineer- South Salt Lake*
Jason Erickson, *Assistant Director- West Valley City Parks & Recreation*
Jens Ammon, *Project Manager- Sageland Collaborative*
Tim Brown, *President/CEO- Tracy Aviary*

Meeting Minutes

Marian Rice, Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:03 PM.

1. Welcome & Introductions

Identification of Event Advisory Committee members and other meeting participants in person and online.

2. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

3. Presentations & Discussion - Community Development

a) Utah Lake Weed Management and Restoration : Addy Valdez, Conservation Biologist, and Sam Braegger, Deputy Director, with the Utah Lake Authority introduced themselves and their organization. They shared information and updates on their efforts to reduce invasive species, propagate native plants, and restore areas around Utah Lake.

Sam reported that the Authority was created in 2022 to replace the Utah Lake Commission. Their overarching management plan revolves around three main pillars of ensuring a thriving ecosystem, world-class recreation, and vibrant communities. Aside from weed management projects, they are performing research into the types of amenities the community members would like to see. Additionally, they are launching marketing campaigns to help shift public perceptions that have been shaded by poor conditions in the past and do not reflect major improvements made to the lake over the past several decades

Addy reported that in 2012, 10,000 acres of land around Utah Lake were covered in phragmites. In 2014, a collaborative effort was launched between the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands, Utah County, the Utah Lake Commission/Utah Lake Authority, and Utah State University, with funding largely provided by the Watershed Restoration Initiative (WRI) and Invasive Species Mitigation Fund, to treat the phragmites. Funding from WRI grants made this project possible by providing continual annual funding for over a decade.

Their treatment management plan has included over a decade of research-backed best practices, such as helicopter spraying, trampling and mowing, and hand trimming. Addy mentioned that annual consistency with treatment has been key to their successes. She also acknowledged there have been trade-offs with historic herbicide use, which has damaged some areas that will be in need of additional restoration going forward.

Over the past two years, they have started moving into a revegetation focus. As of this year, 75-80% of phragmites have been eliminated. Many desirable native species can be very difficult to seed and require additional assistance to get established, such as scarification or stratification. The rapidly changing water levels experienced at Utah Lake are another challenge to seeding.

Addy stated that it is important to be flexible to changing conditions and coordinate well with partners when working on restoration projects around water bodies. Utah State University's seed bank analysis program, conducted through an EPA grant, provided over 15,000 plants to the Authority this year. They are focusing on establishing pollinator habitat. They are also working on expanding public involvement with restoration events and education campaigns.

This year they were able to spread about 7,000 pounds of seed and install about 25,000 native plants, with around 450 volunteers involved. They are acquiring additional funding sources through a variety of means, continuing restoration and conservation efforts, increasing community education, and improving public access to Utah Lake.

Going forward, the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands will provide \$300,000 annually for phragmites treatment in addition to \$1.5 million acquired through other means for water quality and vegetation improvements. They are also in the process of finishing their next application for the WRI grant. Authority staff have recently found rare flowers growing near Utah Lake, which is encouraging as they work toward improving wildlife habitat and ecological services.

Maria Rice asked about the source and terms of the \$1.5 million in funding mentioned in Addy's presentation.

Addy replied that it comes from the Division of Water Quality's Utah Lake Preservation Fund, which was created in 2022 and comes through the American Rescue Plan. They also receive around \$200,000 per year through the WRI grant program. They also receive some funding through other sources, but those are their largest ongoing funding sources.

Marian stated that she appreciated the efforts of the Authority to improve the ecosystem and change public perceptions of Utah Lake.

Soren asked how the Authority is tackling situations in areas that have already been treated and cleared when phragmites still pop up.

Addy replied that different sections are in different phases of treatment. Some areas are very cleared and ready for revegetation, but they wait to revegetate if they see phragmites showing up in certain areas. They also spot spray and hand cut as needed, and focus on installing resilient plants that are good competitors with phragmites.

Soren asked for Addy's advice on being successful with WRI grant applications.

Addy replied that one challenge is that the rankers for this program come from diverse professional backgrounds. She recommends closely and clearly following the prompts on the application, reviewing other applications that have been successful in the past, and including a lot of photographs, supplementary documents, and videos.

Sam Braeggar added that when describing any other plans (state, municipal, etc.) fulfilled by doing this project, it is important to go into detail. He also recommends having many partners listed and to include a good catalog of photographs and videos.

Soren stated that he appreciates the advice and looks forward to working with Utah Lake Authority as partners on a WRI grant for Inlet Park invasive species control. He briefly provided an overview of the project, which, if funded, would address phragmites infestations where the Jordan River meets Utah Lake.

Dan Potts asked Sam if he has experience running a white bass fishing competition and asked about engaging the Utah Lake Authority to consider such a competition.

Sam replied that he does not have this experience, but that they could set up a meeting to discuss this matter.

Eric McCulley stated his appreciation for the Authority's restoration work.

b) Jordan River Parkway Design Guidelines Update & Subcommittee Opportunities

1. "Dark Sky" considerations
2. Fishing Access

Soren provided some background on previous efforts to develop standardized design guidelines, such as consistent signage or pavement materials used along the Parkway. The Commission is hoping to complete the design guidelines document over the next few months and present it to the Governing Board for adoption. The two topics that are in need of additional input and revision are the section on lighting to include "Dark Sky" bird-friendly lighting recommendations, as well as adding a section on fishing access guidelines.

A copy of the original draft for a design guidelines document was included in the meeting packet. Soren asked Committee members to review that document before the next meeting in January and come prepared to provide feedback on anything that may be missing or in need of revision.

Marian mentioned that Salt Lake Public Utilities has done a lot of good work with developing bird-friendly lighting solutions, and recommended including them in the conversations.

Dan Potts stated that he is interested in participating in both groups.

4. Committee Business

a) **[Action Item]** Consider Adopting October 17, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Laura Haskell moved to adopt the listed meeting minutes. Chris Cline seconded the motion.

There was no additional discussion to the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved by the Committee Members present.

b) **[Action Item]** Consider Adopting 2025 Meeting Schedule

Eric McCulley moved to adopt the proposed 2025 meeting schedule. Dan Potts seconded the motion.

There was no additional discussion to the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved by the Committee Members present.

c) Upcoming Meetings:

1. January 16, 2025 - regular meeting, Community Development focus
2. February 20, 2025- regular meeting, Water & Watershed focus

5. Commission Staff Report(s)

a) Director's Report

Soren Simonsen asked Jens Ammon, the newly hired Restoration Coordinator for the Jordan River Commission.

Jens Ammon provided a brief overview of his background, which includes several years spent working on process-based stream restoration across the Western U.S. On January 6, 2025, Jens will begin working as the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands' Jordan River Restoration Coordinator, a joint position with the Jordan River Commission.

He currently works with Sageland Collaborative as a Project Manager for stream restoration. Prior to that, he worked with Anabanch Solutions on similar projects. He has also volunteered for other conservation and wildlife projects, and looks forward to bringing his expertise to his hometown water body of the Jordan River.

Soren asked for Committee feedback on the information included in today's meeting packet, including a news and media update, which summarizes recent news stories and organizes them by category. He also mentioned that Utah Lake will be releasing about 70,000 acre feet to replenish water levels at Great Salt Lake.

Chris Cline stated that she appreciated this resource and asked if it could be emailed out to the TAC as it is updated.

Rachel Turk replied that this will be sent out monthly in the Commission newsletter, and that she also frequently posts media and news coverage on social media platforms as they come out. She also mentioned that she keeps a master list that records news articles published throughout an entire calendar year.

Chris asked if it was possible to include this in the meeting packet at each TAC meeting.

Soren replied that this is currently the plan. This handout covers about the past three months and is longer than it normally will be, but it will be updated periodically.

Marian asked if Rachel could forward any news articles she comes across to her.

Rachel replied that she can forward articles, but recommended that the best option to know of articles in a timely manner is to set up a Google alert for any new publications about the Jordan River.

Soren summarized the next meeting packet handout, which covers upcoming grant and funding opportunities. If any Committee members know about grant and funding opportunities not listed, he asked that they let him know. He also summarized a handout that covers upcoming meetings, events, and activities, and a final handout that covers legislation, projects and initiatives underway that are relevant to the Commission. He reported that the Commission staff will maintain and distribute updated versions of these documents approximately monthly going forward.

Eric stated that there is a new Water Watch program looking at performing large-scale waterway cleanups across Utah in September, which provides an opportunity to consider the Jordan River's tributaries and could complement the Get to the River Festival.

Dan Potts announced that February 10, 2025, would be an Angler's Day on the Hill during the legislative session.

Ali Avery announced that North Salt Lake completed their new boat ramp. Rachel announced that Elliot Mott is leading a paddle to highlight North Salt Lake's recently finished boat ramp. She has posted the details on their social media pages.

6. Adjourn

Laura Haskell moved to adjourn the meeting. Eric McCulley seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:32 PM.

A meeting recording, presentation and handout materials, and meeting minutes are available at <https://www.utah.gov/pmn/sitemap/notice/950029.html>.

Meeting minutes prepared by Ren Griffeth, Jordan River Commission Administrative, Grant & Research Specialist.