

Jordan River Commission

Jordan River Watershed Council Meeting

April 3, 2025 | 10:00 a.m.

Meeting Location

Education Center at Conservation Garden Park
Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District
8275 South 1300 West, West Jordan, UT 84088

And remotely via Zoom

Meeting Attendees

Watershed Council Members

Laura Briefer, Chair, Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities
Heidi Hoven, Vice Chair, National Audubon Society
Afa Aikona, Tracy Aviary (Alternate)
Kelsey Berg, Larry H. Miller Company
Commissioner Skyler Beltran, Davis County
Ken Brand, Jordan Basin Improvement District
Mayor Dirk Burton, West Jordan
Councilmember Silvia Catten, Millcreek
Commissioner John Crofts, Davis County
Mayor Dustin Gettel, Midvale
Gina Grandpre, Saratoga Springs (Alternate)
Michael Horrocks, Wasatch Rowing Foundation
Councilmember Bryn Johnson, Draper
Doug Lund, Utah's Hogle Zoo (Alternate)
Councilmember Tawnee McCay, Riverton
Councilmember Carlos Moreno, Salt Lake County
Todd Munger, Lehi City (Alternate)
Betty Naylor, Gardner Heritage Farm
Rachel Otto, Salt Lake City (Alternate)
Mayor Kristie Overson, Taylorsville
Councilmember Brad Parry, Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation
Councilmember Don Shelton, South Jordan
Councilmember Alison Stroud, Sandy
Shazelle Terry, Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District
Councilmember William Whetstone, West Valley City

Watershed Council Advisors

Terry Adelsbach, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Ajla Hadzialijagic, Utah Governor's Office
Keith Lawrence, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Suzy Lee, Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands
John Mackey, Utah Division of Water Quality
Carly Payne, Utah Division of Water Resources
Luke Peterson, Utah Lake Authority
Todd Stonely, Utah Division of Water Resources
Laura Vernon, Utah Division of Water Resources
Sandy Wingert, Utah Division of Water Quality

Commission Staff

Jens Ammon, Jordan River Restoration Coordinator
Ren Griffeth, Administrative, Grant & Research Specialist
Soren Simonsen, Executive Director & Secretary
Rachel Turk, Communications & Outreach Manager
Julie Williams, Volunteer & Events Manager

Visitors and Guests

Alicia DeLeon, Salt Lake City Mayor's Office
Cory Fralick, West Jordan
Jon Glenn, Chair, Event Advisory Committee
Carolina Herrin, Utah County
Isaac Higham, Salt Lake County
Colby Hill, South Jordan
Alexander Johnson, Office of Congressman Burgess Owens (District 4)
Heather May, Great Salt Lake Collaborative
Stephanie McGinnis, Utah Division of Water Resources
Ben Palmer, Office of Congressman Blake Moore (District 1)
Joel Thompson, Jordan Basin Improvement District
Kyle Wilson, Office of Congresswoman Celeste Maloy (District 2)
Josh Zimmerman, Utah Division of Water Resources
Jade Zephyr, Tracy Aviary

Meeting Minutes

Laura Briefer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

1. Welcome & Introductions

Meeting attendees were asked to mark their presence on the designated attendance website rather than conducting verbal introductions, in order to save time. Participants were informed they could check in at any point during the meeting. The online attendance form was shared via QR code and website link.

2. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

3. Watershed Council Presentations & Discussion

a. Utah State Water Plan

Stephanie McGinnis from the Utah Division of Water Resources led a discussion, shared information about the State Water Plan, and gathered input from the Jordan River Watershed Council. The focus of the discussion was to provide an overview of the State Water Plan development process, explain recent legislative updates, and encourage stakeholder engagement.

Stephanie explained that the State Water Plan is undergoing updates due to House Bill 280, passed during the 2024 legislative session, which led to changes in Utah Code §73-10-15. The new legislation specifies that the plan must be updated at least once every ten years. However, the Division of Water Resources has set an internal goal of revisiting the plan every five years to ensure it remains responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities.

She emphasized that collaboration is a core element of the new planning process. While the Division has historically engaged with partners during prior planning efforts, the updated legislation now formally

designates several state agencies, as well as local watershed councils and water conservancy districts, as specific contributors. This is intended to ensure broader representation and consistency in the State Water Plan's development.

Stephanie noted that the planning process is still in its early phases. An outline of the draft plan has been prepared, and hard copies were made available for attendees. The completed plan is expected to be approximately 150 pages in length. She highlighted the ambitious timeline, explaining that the Division aims to finalize and publish the plan by December 2026.

In the months ahead, Stephanie and her team will be meeting with various watershed councils to initiate conversations, gather input, and begin shaping the plan's content. Public scoping meetings are planned to take place in each basin during the summer, which will allow for local voices and concerns to be integrated into the draft. Following these sessions, the Division will compile the input into a draft version of the plan, which is expected to be released for public comment in the summer of 2026.

Stephanie offered an overview of the plan's structure, noting that the opening chapters will focus on the state's water-related challenges, including natural constraints such as precipitation variability, as well as areas where policy and administration can have influence. The middle chapters will follow a framework similar to the 2022 Governor's Planning and Action Plan for Water, offering continuity and alignment with past initiatives. She placed particular emphasis on Chapter 8, which will be dedicated to "Basin Perspectives." This section aims to document both the challenges and the successes of each basin, highlighting local achievements alongside areas of concern to provide a balanced narrative.

To support the development of the "Basin Perspectives" chapter, Stephanie invited volunteers from the watershed councils to assist with reviewing survey results and helping to identify key themes and success stories for inclusion in the final draft. She also asked for assistance identifying venues and dates for the upcoming public scoping meetings and encouraged anyone interested in participating to connect with her via email, QR code, or chat.

Stephanie reiterated the importance of community involvement throughout the planning process and encouraged all attendees to complete the forthcoming survey, which will offer another opportunity to contribute feedback and insight.

Laura Briefer asked if Stephanie could expand a little bit on what type of content the Division is hoping to receive from the Jordan River Watershed Council for the "Basin Perspectives" chapter.

Stephanie replied that they are looking for local-level perspectives on the challenges and needs facing the Jordan River Basin. She expressed a strong desire for each basin, including the Jordan River Basin, to articulate its specific challenges and needs. Stephanie suggested that the Watershed Council already possesses much of this knowledge and recommended a collaborative approach, whereby councils could submit their insights, even in simple bullet-point format, for the Division to draft into formal language. These drafts would then be returned to the councils for review and refinement. She clarified that while deeper involvement in the drafting process is welcome, the intention is to avoid creating an undue burden for council members.

Laura further highlighted the wide scope of input the Division hopes to receive, spanning infrastructure, water supply, environmental quality, and other relevant topics. She encouraged the council to openly discuss and prioritize the key issues they believe should be highlighted in the State Water Plan.

Stephanie added that she doesn't want to provide too many parameters for the type of information they are looking for, so that they can receive more open responses from stakeholders.

Several members noted that new Board representatives might benefit from a brief overview of the State Water Plan's history and objectives.

Stephanie explained that the first comprehensive State Water Plan was developed in 1990 and has since undergone two major updates. The plan aims to outline Utah's water resource issues, assess water availability, and define actionable goals and steps to address challenges.

Todd Stonely added that earlier versions of the plan were more strategy-oriented, whereas the current plan aims to address a broader range of concerns, including water quality, wildlife, outdoor recreation, and other statutory considerations. He noted the importance of preserving water-related values while projecting future challenges, particularly in fast-growing regions such as Washington County. He also mentioned the significance of water reuse and efficient use, especially as growth continues and Utah continues to face challenges with droughts.

Laura asked if Todd could provide more background on how the information obtained for this information is used to determine priorities, for the sake of attendees who may be less familiar with the State Water Plan.

Todd replied that the information is used to try and anticipate the upcoming needs for water across the entire state and coordinate efforts to meet those needs.

Laura emphasized the critical role of stakeholder feedback, particularly in the Jordan River Watershed, one of Utah's most densely populated basins, which faces complex current and future challenges. She invited members to provide input during the meeting or at a later date.

Heidi Hoven asked about the process for identifying specific projects within large watersheds like the Jordan River.

Stephanie reiterated her preference for local councils to take the lead in identifying and proposing these projects.

Todd mentioned the Utah Water Infrastructure Plan, which focuses on the development, enhancement, repair, and replacement of infrastructure related to both drinking water and wastewater. This plan will be referenced in the State Water Plan and will help prioritize projects statewide.

Betty Naylor stressed the importance of including agriculture in water planning, underscoring its essential role in Utah's economy and food security.

Stephanie confirmed that the plan would dedicate an entire chapter to agricultural water use, highlighting both its importance and the challenges it faces.

Michael Horrocks raised concerns about whether population growth would inevitably strain water resources. He asked to what extent that was considered in their planning.

Stephanie and Todd addressed the issue by introducing the concept of "decoupling," where population growth does not necessarily lead to increased water consumption, especially in urban areas where denser development can limit water-intensive landscaping and promote more efficient water use. They reported that municipalities in the Jordan River Basin have demonstrated successful decoupling over the past two decades.

Michael asked about their consideration of the water demands of businesses, especially industries like data centers.

Todd acknowledged the complexity of balancing industrial growth with sustainable water use, noting that site selection and efficient use practices are crucial. One concern that frequently comes up is the water use requirements of data centers.

John Mackey informed the group about the upcoming Utah Water Infrastructure Plan (UWIP) project submission window, opening on April 7. He stressed the importance of submitting projects, especially for entities seeking state funding, and explained that the plan covers a broad spectrum of water infrastructure, including drinking water, irrigation, wastewater, and others.

John also asked whether the State Water Plan would provide a formal framework for the Council to submit project ideas outside of the UWIP process.

Stephanie acknowledged the question and confirmed that the State Water Plan and the Utah Watershed Council structure would support this, noting that both processes are designed to elevate local input to state leadership.

Dirk Burton addressed concerns about the water usage of data centers, and noted that a representative in West Jordan had clarified that newer data centers have moved away from water-intensive cooling systems in favor of electrical solutions and other technologies, significantly reducing their water consumption.

Afa Aikona emphasized the need to ensure that outreach for the State Water Plan includes Indigenous tribes, especially those whose lands and heritage are tied to the Jordan River watershed, as well as other marginalized and underrepresented communities. She asked if local tribes would be consulted.

Stephanie noted that the Division welcomes efforts to collaborate and ensure meaningful and inclusive engagement. She replied that they will be reaching out to tribal entities.

Don Shelton described the methods that the Wasatch Front Regional Council uses for public engagement in its data-gathering process and asked if that could be a beneficial model to follow.

Stephanie replied that this would likely be helpful, but public engagement is outside of her scope.

Laura noted that she would like the Watershed Council to help in the public engagement process to ensure that the diverse stakeholders all have the opportunity to provide adequate feedback. She also noted that, as the liaison to the State Watersheds Council, she would like to be able to bring back good information to that entity as well.

Stephanie agreed that it would be beneficial to proceed in this way and that this is the type of feedback that will prove to be helpful.

Laura thanked attendees for the discussion

b. Great Salt Lake Basin Integrated Plan

Laura Vernon from the Utah Division of Water Resources provided a brief update on the progress of the Great Salt Lake Basin Integrated Plan (GSLBIP). She also described and sought input from the Watershed Council for a basin water model.

Laura reminded the Council that this is a multi-year initiative launched in partnership with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and supported by state legislation passed in 2022. It is designed to ensure a resilient and sustainable water supply for the Great Salt Lake and all associated water uses within the basin, including municipal, agricultural, industrial, and environmental needs.

Laura explained that the project's primary objective is the development of a comprehensive decision support tool that will allow stakeholders to better understand how different water management decisions, such as changes in agricultural use, turf reduction, or the scale of low-impact development, affect water availability and distribution throughout the basin, including downstream impacts on the Great Salt Lake.

Currently, the project team is focused on developing the core components of the modeling tool, which will incorporate regional climate projections, hydrological data, and water demand estimates. While some of the model components are nearing completion, the planning model specific to the Great Salt Lake Basin is still under active development. Laura noted that the Division is awaiting additional federal funding approvals to support further modeling efforts, though in-house teams are making steady progress in the meantime.

As part of the project's collaborative approach, the Division is seeking input from local stakeholders to ensure that all relevant data is captured in the model. Laura highlighted that Jake Serago recently distributed draft schematics to approximately 60 local contacts to solicit feedback on infrastructure and water use data. These schematics are intended to document key system features, such as treatment plants, diversions, stream gauges, and major users, to help ensure the model accurately reflects real-world conditions across all river basins within the system.

Laura also outlined the broader timeline for the Integrated Plan, which is now expected to extend through 2028 due to some delays in the initial phases. She indicated that periodic updates would continue as the project progresses and that the Division would seek input from the Watershed Council on draft scenarios once the modeling tool is ready.

In addition to the main planning effort, Laura noted that several related subprojects are underway to inform future water management decisions. These include studies on dust control, agricultural water optimization, municipal and industrial water conservation, and leasing opportunities. She offered to coordinate future presentations on these subprojects for the Council once the results become available, likely beginning mid-year.

Laura Briefer asked if Laura Vernon could send her a list of the mentioned projects for her to review once they become available.

Laura replied that she would be happy to do so.

4. Council Business

a. **[Action Item] Consider Adopting February 6, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

Heidi Hoven moved to adopt the February 6, 2025, meeting minutes. Dirk Burton seconded the motion.

There was no further discussion of the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved by the Council members present.

b. **Additional Watershed Council Announcements & Information from Members and Advisors**

There were no additional announcements or information shared.

5. Adjourn

Laura Briefer moved to adjourn the meeting and reconvene as the Jordan River Commission Governing Board. Silvia Catten seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 AM, and reconvened as the Jordan River Commission Governing Board (see <https://www.utah.gov/pm/sitemap/notice/977929.html>).

A meeting recording, presentation, handout materials, and meeting minutes are available at <https://www.utah.gov/pm/sitemap/notice/972309.html>.

Meeting minutes prepared by Ren Griffeth and Soren Simonsen, Secretary.

Adopted August 7, 2025.