

Jordan River Commission Jordan River Watershed Council Meeting

August 7, 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
Commissioner Skyler Beltran, Utah County
Tim Brown, Tracy Aviary
Councilmember Silvia Catten, Millcreek
Commissioner John Crofts, Davis County
Cory Fralick, West Jordan (Alternate)
Gina Grandpre, Saratoga Springs (Alternate)
Lisa Hartman, Salt Lake County Mayor's Office (Alternate)
Bruce Holyoak, Murray (Alternate)
Michael Horrocks, Wasatch Rowing Foundation
Councilmember Jiro Johnson, Salt Lake County Council
Wendelin Knobloch, Midvale (Alternate)
Councilmember Ted Knowlton, North Salt Lake
Liz Larsen, Utah's Hogle Zoo
Steve Lehman, West Valley City (Alternate)
Councilmember Tawnee McCay, Riverton
Councilmember Brad Parry, Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation
Scott Peters, Jordan River Foundation (Alternate)
Don Tingey, South Jordan (Alternate)

Watershed Council Advisors

Sam Braegger, Utah Lake Authority
Benn Buys, Utah Fairpark Area Investment & Restoration (UFAIR) District
Ajla Hadzialijagic, Utah Governor's Office
Keith Lawrence, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
John Mackey, Utah Division of Water Quality
Carly Payne, Utah Division of Water Resources
Ben Stireman, Utah Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands
Sandy Wingert, Utah Division of Water Quality

Commission Staff

Jens Ammon, Jordan River Restoration Coordinator
Ren Griffeth, Administrative, Grant & Research Specialist
Rachel Lyn, Communications & Outreach Manager
Soren Simonsen, Executive Director & Secretary
Shelby Strickler, Seasonal Volunteer & Event Coordinator

Visitors and Guests

Becca Frei, Utah Division of Water Resources
Jon Glenn, Chair, Event Advisory Committee
Mike Guymon, Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities (Alternate)
Anna Habben, Mighty Penguin - Get to the River Festival Consultant
Hailey Kirlin, Utah Division of Water Resources
Holly Lopez, Salt Lake Department of Public Utilities
Doug Lund, Utah's Hogle Zoo (Alternate)
Heather May, Great Salt Lake Collaborative
Eric McCulley, McCulley Watershed Consulting Services

Meeting Minutes

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

1. Watershed Council Welcome & Roll Call

a. Introduction of New Members & Alternates

Lisa Hartman, Associate Deputy Mayor of Regional Operations for Salt Lake County, and the newly designated alternate for Mayor Jenny Wilson, introduced herself, noting she has worked with Mayor Wilson for five years. Their portfolio includes topics relevant to the Jordan River, such as flood control, watershed management, environmental sustainability, public workshops, and animal services. Before taking on this role, she served as a policy advisor. She also previously ran a consulting firm, where she managed public education for the "We All Live Downstream" program.

Councilmember Jiro Johnson, the newest member of the Salt Lake County Council for District 1, introduced himself. He expressed his excitement to be working with the Watershed Council and Commission Board, emphasizing the importance of the Jordan River to District 1, which he represents.

Laura Briefer noted that Joel Thompson, the facility manager for the Jordan Basin Improvement District, was the third new member. He was unable to attend, and they would allow him time to introduce himself at a later date.

Laura asked attendees to mark their attendance using the online form.

2. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Presentations & Discussion

a. Jordan River Watershed Council Strategic Planning Discussion

Laura Briefer, Chair, led a strategic planning discussion for the Jordan River Watershed Council. Council leadership had discussed the importance of facilitating an open discussion, and she highlighted the Council's role in contributing to local and statewide watershed efforts, including providing feedback on the State Water Plan. To develop the Council's strategic plan, Laura asked participants to share their top concerns and opportunities for the Jordan River Watershed, how they are addressing them, what limitations or barriers they face, and how the Council can be a resource. She encouraged broad thinking about water-related issues, including water supply, infrastructure, quality, ecosystem health, and rates, stressing that the information would be used to understand concerns across the larger watershed and to report to the Utah Watersheds Council. Guests were also invited to participate.

Silvia Catten discussed the challenge to cities in utilizing grant opportunities for river-related improvements, especially those related to water quality, due to a lack of in-house water experts. She suggested the need for general guidelines on what could be done with grant money to improve water quality and ecosystem health. Silvia emphasized thinking about the entire watershed system, including upstream creeks and streams, to better identify projects for which grant funds could be utilized.

Wendelin Knobloch noted the recurring problems with homeless activities and stormwater runoff, and their impacts on water quality. He discussed issues such as piles of sod or dirt seen near storm drains and the need for more knowledge and enforcement of regulations among different jurisdictions. Wendelin stated that it would be beneficial for cities to have information to help them know what actions to take and what systems are in place for them to utilize as they seek to improve water quality.

Brad Perry echoed Silvia's point about the lack of in-house experts and suggested that the Council could serve as a hub for sharing resources. He noted that partners can help review grant applications and share information on successful projects, as many efforts are similar across the watershed. He mentioned his experience in the Bureau of Reclamation and emphasized the benefit of a repository for projects and programs.

Rachel Lyn built on the discussion of grants and resources, stating that combining projects could strengthen grant applications and increase the likelihood of success in many cases.

Don Tingey suggested South Jordan's water reuse project as a beneficial initiative for the watershed. He commended the Commission and Watershed Council for advocating for best practices and highlighted the importance of using these practices and advocating for public education to foster better understanding of watershed-related efforts. Don also shared that educational signage has a role in teaching children and other visitors about watershed health. Laura asked Don to elaborate on South Jordan's water reuse project. Don clarified that, while he was not a technical expert on their water reuse project, it involves cleaning gray water and returning it to the Jordan River as part of a pilot program, with potential future expansions for reuse, thus addressing elements of both water quality and supply.

Eric McCulley provided practical best practice ideas, such as encouraging sweeping fertilizer into grass instead of through the stormwater system and targeted outreach to landscaping companies. He also suggested addressing leaking outdoor irrigation, creating bioswales for stormwater filtration in redeveloped areas, and cleaning organic material from pipes to reduce the biological oxygen demand. Eric emphasized the need for a collaborative effort across the entire watershed for effective improvements and highlighted the importance of educating youth, restoring riparian areas, and picking up garbage.

Lisa Hartman highlighted the importance of flood control and balancing safety with recreation. She noted the challenge of having many projects but limited funding, specifically mentioning the Lower Jordan River levee project, which would cost an estimated \$20 million to complete and would involve the removal of established trees. Lisa raised the point that all stormwater from Salt Lake County flows into this area and stressed the need for the state to consider the County's water management holistically, integrating recreation into infrastructure planning, and securing federal financial support.

Silvia Catten agreed with the priorities of infrastructure and floodplains, drawing on her city's decade-long struggle with an issue that came from poor planning in the past, emphasizing the time and multi-agency effort required for such projects.

John Mackey expressed that stormwater issues are important to the Division of Water Quality and noted the challenges associated with flushes that occur after long dry periods. He also described complaints received about the inconsistency in how MS4 permits are enforced across municipalities and other jurisdictions, which complicates unification. He supported the idea of disseminating Best Management Practices (BMPs) and suggested that incremental local improvements, driven by data about the most effective interventions, can help to address this complicated problem. Education-driven initiatives without regulatory hammers could lead to significant regional gains in water quality and water conservation.

Laura echoed concerns about water quality and funding for infrastructure from Salt Lake City's perspective, specifically mentioning the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act. She highlighted the challenge of emerging contaminants like PFAS and the regulatory and public health concerns associated with them. She also expressed keen awareness of water quantity and supply issues for communities in the Jordan River Basin, noting the impact of longer drought cycles and the uncertainty of water supplies. Laura mentioned the high and uncertain costs of aging infrastructure updates, which burden ratepayers. She expressed appreciation for the focus on communicating best practices within the Watershed Council for water quality and conservation, especially during droughts. She asked for descriptions of how other jurisdictions handle their utilities.

Wendelin shared that Midvale has some of its own wells and receives a small amount from Salt Lake City, but its water primarily comes from the Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District.

Ben Stireman mentioned that \$53 million in grants for Great Salt Lake-benefiting water projects was released, presenting an opportunity for infrastructure upgrades and dedicating water to the lake. He also highlighted the challenge of increased efficiencies leading to less water reaching natural areas and emphasized the need to consider natural resources when implementing upgrades. Ben noted the exploration of water rights transactions (leases or purchases) for Great Salt Lake's benefit, focusing on areas of the watershed that impact the Lake and inherently impact the Jordan River. He suggested timing these transactions to improve flows during periods of low flow in the River, mimicking natural hydrology for overall improvements.

Soren Simonsen highlighted the stark water quality difference between the lower and upper parts of the watershed. He observed that urbanization significantly affects water quality and noted the expense and time required to transform stormwater systems. Salt Lake City's Rose Park Cornell Wetland Area Project provides a good example of beneficial renovations. Soren recounted an encouraging experience where clear water flowed from Three Creeks Confluence, demonstrating possibilities for improved tributaries. He emphasized the enormous community effort required to connect people to the watershed and suggested involving school and religious groups in service projects focused on neighborhood clean-ups, as this directly impacts water quality. Soren also expressed a strong desire to revisit riparian ordinance developments, citing a recent devastating flood in Texas that shows the need to respect the space that rivers need. He mentioned the successful riparian overlay zones implemented by cities like Lehi, which give room for more natural floodplains. He stressed the need for the entire Commission and Council partnership to work together in these endeavors.

Scott Peters emphasized the importance of preserving, restoring, and enhancing the area's ecological function and habitat. This includes responsible development that allows recreational access while protecting habitat connections and managing invasive species. Scott also highlighted the importance of community access and education, advocating for educating people about the Jordan River Corridor's value as a community resource (for natural, human, and cultural reasons), available activities, and ways to protect and enhance it. He suggested providing multi-use and varied activities to encourage diverse engagement. Finally, Scott stressed the importance of maintaining and enhancing human qualities, including building and maintaining trails, acknowledging that maintenance is a significant challenge beyond capital development.

Laura noted that her team planned to summarize key themes and present an outline of the strategic plan at the next meeting. Funding and grants for infrastructure to improve water quality and quantity were identified as strong themes. Attendees were encouraged to reach out to Ren Griffeth with any additional thoughts before the next regularly scheduled meeting.

3. Watershed Council Business

a. [Action Item] Adopt the April 3, 2025, Watershed Council Meeting Minutes

John Crofts moved to adopt the April 3, 2025, meeting minutes. Silvia Catten 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

Brad Parry announced a meeting in Ogden on August 27th, hosted by the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation, focusing on the Bear River and Great Salt Lake. This public event will present and discuss a recent project's effectiveness and how it could be used by others. Brad shared a handout about the event, which was included in the meeting packet.

4. Adjourn as Jordan River Watershed Council & Reconvene as the Jordan River Commission Governing Board

Tim Brown moved to adjourn the meeting and reconvene as the Jordan River Commission Governing Board. Tawnee McCay seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 AM and reconvened as the Jordan River Commission Governing Board (see <https://www.utah.gov/pmnn/sitemap/notice/1009599.html>).

A meeting recording, presentation, handout materials, and meeting minutes for the Jordan River Watershed Council are available at <https://www.utah.gov/pmnn/sitemap/notice/997095.html>.

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

Adopted December 4, 2025.