

# Jordan River Commission Event Advisory Committee

October 9, 2025 | 10:00 a.m.

## Meeting Location

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The meeting was conducted virtually via Zoom, with an anchor location at the Jordan River Commission office.

## Meeting Attendees

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### Event Advisory Committee Members

Jon Glenn, Chair  
India Nielsen Barfuss, Vice Chair  
Lauren Brady, Salt Lake County  
Councilmember Silvia Catten, Millcreek  
Kyle Fuchshuber, Salt Lake City Sustainability  
Todd Munger, Jordan River Foundation (Lehi Environmental Sustainability & Recovery)

### Commission Staff

Ren Griffeth, Administrative, Grant & Research Specialist  
Caroline Johnston, Event & Volunteer Coordinator  
Rachel Lyn, Communications & Outreach Manager  
Soren Simonsen, Executive Director

### Visitors and Guests

Dave Driggs, Mighty Penguin - Get to the River Festival Festival Consultant  
Cindy Kindred, Mighty Penguin - Get to the River Festival Festival Consultant

## Meeting Minutes

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Jon Glenn, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM.

### **1. Welcome & Introductions**

Roll call of Event Advisory Committee members and introduction of other meeting participants in person and online.

### **2. Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

### **3. Committee Business**

#### a) **[Action Item] Adopt Meeting Minutes from August 28, 2025**

Soren Simonsen displayed and briefly reviewed the August 28, 2025, meeting minutes.

***Lauren Brady moved to adopt the August 28, 2025, meeting minutes. India Barfuss Nielsen seconded the motion.***

There was no further discussion of the motion.

***The motion was unanimously approved by the Committee members present.***

b) Commission Staff Updates

Soren Simonsen thanked Shelby Strickler, the Seasonal Volunteer & Event Specialist during the summer, for her work with the Commission. She had relocated to Spain at the end of September to pursue a professional opportunity. Soren also thanked intern Meg Grant for her work over the past few months and noted that she would be continuing her education at the University of Utah. Soren introduced the current Event & Volunteer intern, Sage Leeman, and reported that Frances Schneider would be continuing her work on educational programming due to additional funding from the Jordan River Foundation. He also noted that the Communications & Outreach intern over the summer, Amelia Miller, was continuing through the fall and introduced the new Event & Volunteer Coordinator, Caroline Johnston.

Caroline introduced herself and summarized her previous experience. She has been working on the Jordan River for several years, starting as an intern with Utah's Hogle Zoo. She then worked as an Event & Volunteer intern with the Jordan River Commission from last August through May. This summer, after graduating from the University of Utah in May, she completed an individual placement with the Utah Conservation Corps, continuing her work on the Jordan River. During this placement, she worked with the Utah Reclamation, Mitigation, and Conservation Commission on their property in South Jordan at the Jordan River Migratory Bird Reserve. She is now back at the Jordan River Commission full-time and noted that September was a busy but enjoyable month.

c) Website Update

Rachel Lyn reported that the website is nearing a soft launch at the end of the month with all updates made, though content will continue to be added, particularly to the Water Dashboard. Feedback on the website is being sought. Mobile app development has also begun, funded by a Recreational Trails Program grant from Salt Lake County, and is anticipated to be completed in the spring of 2026.

d) Video & Photography Project Update

Rachel Lyn summarized work on the video and photography project to this point. Sage Nightingale has completed the active filming and photography elements, and work is ongoing to edit both short and longer videos. These visuals will be used on the new website and for marketing purposes.

e) Education Partner Program Update

Rachel Lyn described how intern Francis Schneider has been creating contact databases for various school districts. Francis and Soren Simonsen attended the Utah Teacher Science Association Conference in September. The team also plans to attend the Utah Association of Environmental Education Educators conference in November for follow-up sessions. They are also exploring building out a series of volunteer service projects for schools to participate in. She has also been looking into developing a youth coalition and is seeking Committee involvement in expanding this program.

Soren Simonsen noted that he would be discussing this matter with the Chair and Vice Chair, and it will likely be included on a future agenda.

f) Upcoming Committee Meeting

Thursday, December 11, 2025, 10:00 AM

**4. Commission Events**

a. Get to the River Festival – September 2025

i. Festival Summary Report by Mighty Penguin and Commission Staff

Cindy Kindred thanked the Committee members for their active participation in organizing events for the year and for their sponsorship of the Festival. Marathon returned as the presenting sponsor at the \$15,000 level and contributed an additional \$5,000 for co-branded water bottles. Their employees also donated \$2,000 from their philanthropic fund, bringing Marathon's total contribution to \$22,000. Marathon has also indicated support for the Festival next year.

Gold sponsors, contributing between \$5,000 and \$15,000, included Chevron, Enbridge Gas, Larry H. Miller Real Estate, KRCL, Salt Lake County ZAP Tier II grant, Swire Coca-Cola, and Thanksgiving Point. Silver sponsors were the Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District, Rio Tinto Kennecott, Rocky Mountain Power, Hogle Zoo, and Zions Bank. Other Festival Supporters included IC Group, The Langdon Group, the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands, the Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation, the Utah Division of Water Quality, the Utah Division of Water Resources, and the Utah Transit Authority. In total, there were 22 sponsors, raising \$84,900 in cash and over \$7,500 in in-kind contributions.

Media coverage for the year was similar to the previous year, with KRCL providing 100 20-second promotional spots in August and September, which were shared with partners. Interviews were conducted on Good Things Utah with KTVX ABC4. Fox 13's Good Day Utah featured five segments, including pieces filmed at Porter's Landing, at Marathon's facility, and at the Fisher Mansion. KRCL also aired a RadioACTIVE segment promoting the Fisher Beer Festival.

The Festival spanned 32 days, with 57 total events, 31 community partners, 16 cities, and 3 counties participating, attracting thousands of community participants. Partner events included a North Salt Lake Jordan River Paddle, Canyon Rim is Community's Millcreek Trailhead cleanup, Lehi's Day of Service cleanup event, a volunteer night with Midvale and Zions Bancorporation, and refinery tours with Marathon. Other partner events were the Seven Canyons Trust Range to River Relay, the Fisher Mansion Beer Garden, the Conservation Garden Park's 25th Birthday Celebration, the Division of Water Resources' Water Talks, Utah Outdoor Therapies 5k and 10K rides, and West Valley City's Plein Air Exhibit, Drum Circle, and Riverside Concert.

The Commission hosted several events, including the Media Kickoff, a weekly Walk and Talk series on Mondays, a weekly Pedal the Parkway series on Wednesdays, and a weekly Paddle the River series on Fridays. Other Commission-hosted events included a field trip to Rio Tinto Kennecott's Bingham Mine, a floating cleanup with Hogle Zoo, a Stormwater Field Trip with the Technical Advisory Committee, a Love Your Watershed cleanup, and the Jordan River Friends Celebration and Recognition event at Thanksgiving Point.

The event at Thanksgiving Point, held during the final week of the Festival, was well-attended and included free tickets for some participants to visit Ashton Gardens. It also featured musical entertainment from a local band. Joel Ferry, head of the Department of Natural Resources, was the keynote speaker. Rachel presented a short film about the Festival, as well as a short film about the Commission that covered the issues and opportunities around the River. Outstanding friends of the River were recognized, including Mayor Dick Burton from West Jordan, Lon Richardson Jr. from Jordan River Foundation Board, Murray City and Murray City School District, the Seven Canyons Trust, and Laura Hansen, who served as the first employee of the Commission. The evening was described as beautiful and enjoyable.

Soren asked Committee members for feedback on the Festival.

Jon Glenn noted that he attended several events. He found them enjoyable and expressed that he wished he could have attended more of them.

Rachel Lyn thanked Jon for his participation and willingness to assist and shuttle attendees at paddle events.

ii. **[Action Item]** Consider Extending the Contract with Mighty Penguin for Get to the River Festival Fundraising, Planning, and Management

Soren Simonsen discussed the consideration of extending Mighty Penguin's contract for planning and management of the Get to the River Festival. Soren clarified that the original Request for Proposals (RFP) allowed for annual extensions up to five years, and extending the contract through 2027 would fall within this limit, meaning a new RFP would be required for the 2028 Festival.

The proposal included increasing Mighty Penguin's compensation from \$47,000 to \$50,000 for the coming year, with a further increase to \$52,000 for a second year if a two-year extension through 2027 was considered, totaling \$102,000 for both years. Soren also discussed a goal of increasing fundraising capability so that Mighty Penguin's fee represents closer to 40% of the total budget, rather than 50%, to allow for expanded grant programs, new partnerships, and increased promotion through paid media and social media platforms.

Dave Driggs of Mighty Penguin expressed that it has been a delight to watch the Festival grow, and their team has greatly enjoyed being a part of it.

Soren noted that this meeting was noticed as having a closed session, if any Committee members would like to have private, internal discussions before voting on the contract extension.

Jon Glenn asked a clarifying question about what year would require a new RFP to be put out. Soren confirmed that the RFP would be required for fundraising and planning for the 2028 Festival and beyond.

Lauren Brady inquired about the Jordan River Commission staff's preference regarding the contract extension. Soren stated that the staff was pleased with Mighty Penguin's work, especially the efforts of Anna Haben and Cindy Kindred, and recommended at least a one-year extension. Ideally, a two-year extension could allow for more cultivation of new sponsorship opportunities over a longer time frame, particularly with large developments and businesses around the Jordan River. He noted that the Commission would like to have two presenting sponsors.

***Silvia Catten moved to extend the contract with Mighty Penguin for two additional years. India Nielsen Barfuss seconded the motion.***

There was no further discussion of the motion.

***The motion was unanimously approved by the Committee members present.***

Jon Glenn noted a previous discussion by Committee leadership about potential future sponsors and partners, including Momentum Recycling, Okland Construction, The Front, and The Boulderling Project. Community members and staff were encouraged to offer additional suggestions.

Caroline Johnston mentioned that volunteer opportunities with new organizations, such as Harmon's, could provide opportunities to engage potential partners.

Cindy offered to follow up with Caroline regarding Harmon's. She noted that The Front and The Boulderling Project have been contacted multiple times and are getting closer to a position to sponsor as their construction projects progress.

Caroline offered to connect Mighty Penguin to the administrative staff she knows at these organizations.

Silvia Catten stated that Millcreek had also previously attempted to reach out to them. While they had not been in a position to provide sponsorships to them either, Silvia also agreed that they seemed increasingly interested in providing support.

Todd Munger asked if anyone had been in discussions with the new development called The Point to discuss a potential partnership. Soren noted that, while The Point land use authority has shown a low level of interest, the three development partners, the Lincoln Group, Colmena Group, and Wadsworth, are potentially promising opportunities. Construction on the first buildings at The Point is expected to begin next spring. Larry H. Miller Real Estate, a current sponsor and Jordan River Commission Board member, was discussed as

a potential for higher-level sponsorship as their Power District project with Rocky Mountain Power ramps up. Rio Tinto, a new sponsor this year, is also being cultivated for increased involvement.

Tiffany Clayson, the new Vice President of Community Engagement at Swire Coca-Cola, was identified as a potential contact due to her past relationship with Mayor Ben McAdams and her personal interest in the Jordan River. Soren also reported that Swire Coca-Cola has been an ongoing sponsor, and has also been engaging employees in volunteer activities. They have adopted the Galena Soo'nkahni Preserve as a project, with a large planting event scheduled this fall.

Kyle Fuchshuber mentioned contacts at Waste Management and Ace, which were seen as valuable due to their environmental interests and involvement with the Utah Recycling Alliance, especially given the volume of recyclable materials found during canoe cleanups. He also suggested approaching ski resorts.

Jon Glenn asked if any of the duck clubs or other wildlife organizations had been contacted. Cindy reported that they were identified as potential sponsors with a vested interest in the River.

Soren added that the Rudy Duck Club, North Point Duck Club, and Ducks Unlimited, an international organization, had been involved with Jordan River conservation efforts, and further pursuit of these connections was planned. Trout Unlimited and the Utah Rivers Council were also noted as potential partners.

b. City Nature Challenge

Soren Simonsen discussed the City Nature Challenge (CNC), which Caroline would be taking on responsibilities for going forward. The Commission has been involved for several years, with the Museum of Natural History at the University of Utah leading organizing efforts. The CNC, happening around Earth Day, aims to engage people in exploring nature. The goal is to increase participation at the Jordan River. Soren asked for feedback from Committee members on ways to boost engagement.

Silvia Catten suggested anchoring programs to teachers who find value in them and can integrate them into their curriculum. The South Salt Lake Valley Mosquito Abatement District's education specialist, who visits classrooms, is a potential contact.

Kyle Fuchshuber also suggested leveraging Salt Lake City Waste and Recycling's recycling ambassadors program for outreach to schools and underserved communities. They also occasionally work with Youth City.

Rachel Lyn expressed appreciation for these suggestions. She noted the limited capacity of the Commission to conduct extensive outreach. She proposed the idea of educating teachers and pointing them to existing City Nature Challenge trainings and other resources.

Soren asked Lauren Brady if Salt Lake County Parks and Recreation participates in the CNC. Lauren replied that they do not, to her knowledge. She reported that they used to have an outdoor program coordinator, but that was before her employment began, and she is not aware of anyone coordinating outdoor events at this time. Soren noted that it could be valuable to develop resources for county and city Parks and Recreation departments to distribute, which would save them from needing additional staff. Lauren replied that they are happy to be promotional partners.

Silvia suggested following the example of the Mosquito Abatement District, which sends out materials for others to easily use in newsletters and social media.

Soren thanked attendees for their input and stated that he and Caroline would discuss these ideas in more depth.

c. Golden Spoke

*Item 4.c was postponed due to time constraints.*

**5. Other Events & Resources**

- a. Utah Outdoor Recreation Summit - October 14-15, 2025
- b. Utah Lake Symposium - October 30-31, 2025
- c. Salt Lake County Watershed Symposium - November 19-20, 2025
- d. 2026 Day of Service Opportunities
  - i. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday - Day of Service, Monday, January 19, 2026
  - ii. Earth Day - Day of Service, Wednesday, April 22, 2026
  - iii. 9/11 Remembrance Day Holiday - Day of Service, Friday, September 11, 2026

Soren Simonsen briefly described several upcoming events and encouraged Committee members to attend if they are able.

India Nielsen Barfuss stated that she was happy to provide a promo code for anyone interested in attending the Utah Outdoor Recreation Summit. More information can be found at <https://recreation.utah.gov/summit/>.

## **6. Communications, Engagement & Outreach**

- a. Recent Media Opportunities, Engagement & Coverage

*Item 6.c was provided as a written News & Media Summary report.*

- b. Upcoming Media Opportunities
- c. Other

*Items 6.b and 6.c were postponed due to time constraints.*

## **7. Adjourn**

***India Nielsen Barfuss moved to adjourn.***

The meeting was adjourned at 11:32 AM.

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*A meeting recording, minutes, and other information will be available following the meeting at <https://www.utah.gov/pmn/sitemap/notice/1023729.html>.*

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

*Adopted December 11, 2025.*