

Jordan River Commission Technical Advisory Committee

April 17, 2025 | 2:00 p.m.

Meeting Location

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

Meeting Attendees

Technical Advisory Committee Members

Gina Grandpre, Vice Chair, Senior Planner - Saratoga Springs
Ali Avery, Long Range Planner - North Salt Lake
Kevin Ball, Urban Forester & Open Space Coordinator - South Jordan
Lynn Berni, Watershed Planning & Restoration Coordinator - Salt Lake County
Tori Bird, Conservation Action Coordinator - Utah's Hogle Zoo
Tim Brown, Executive Director - Tracy Aviary
Angelo Calacino, Park Development Project Manager - Salt Lake County
Kiani Ellingson, Environmental Advisor - Kennecott/Rio Tinto
Jason Erikson, Assistant Parks Director - West Valley City
Mike Guymon, Stormwater Program Manager - Salt Lake City Public Utilities
Laura Haskell, Jordan River Basin Area Specialist - Division of Water Resources
Bruce Holyoak, Park Superintendent - Murray
Heidi Hoven, Gillmor Sanctuary Senior Manager - National Audubon Society
Kyle Johnson, Upper Jordan River Water Commissioner - Utah Division of Water Rights
Lynn Larsen, Vice President - Jordan River Foundation
Theron Miller, Program Manager - Jordan and Farmington Bay Water Quality Council
Shauna Mecham, Active Transportation Planner - Mountainland Association of Governments
Dan McBride, General Manager - South Salt Lake Valley Mosquito Abatement
Eric McCulley, Private Consultant - McCulley Watershed Consulting Services
Todd Munger, Sustainability Director - Lehi
Nathan Page, Grant Administrator - Riverton
Dan Potts, Aquatic Ecologist - Salt Lake Fish & Game Foundation
Michele Rehbein, Education Specialist - Salt Lake City Mosquito Abatement District
Matt Ryan, Community Planner - Wasatch Front Regional Council
Todd Taylor, Planner - Draper
Addy Valdez, Conservation Biologist - Utah Lake Authority
Sandy Wingert, Environmental Scientist - Utah Division of Water Quality

Commission Staff

Jens Ammon, Jordan River Restoration Coordinator
Ren Griffeth, Administration, Grant & Research Specialist
Soren Simonsen, Executive Director & Secretary
Shelby Strickler, Intern
Rachel Turk, Communications & Outreach Manager
Julie Williams, Event & Volunteer Manager

Visitors and Guests

Tayler Allen, Student - University of Utah
Caden Baines, Student - University of Utah

Benn Buys, Executive Director - Utah Fairpark Area Investment & Restoration District (UFAIR) District
Jessica Caseras, Student - University of Utah
Kira Johnson, Salt Lake City Public Lands
Makaylah Maponga, Public Lands Planner - Salt Lake City Public Lands
Daniel Mendoza, Professor of City Metropolitan Planning - University of Utah
Jacob Moser, Engineer - South Salt Lake
Sherrie Pace, Community Development Director - North Salt Lake
Nate Shipp, DAI Utah
Arthur Shraer Frankich, Student - University of Utah
Krisel Travis, DAI Utah
Mike West, Planning Division Manager - Lehi

Meeting Minutes

Soren Simonsen, Secretary, called the meeting to order at 2:04 PM at the Vice Chair's request, due to a time conflict at the beginning of the meeting, and the absence of the Chair and Past Chair.

1. Welcome & Introductions

Introduction of Technical Advisory Committee members and other meeting participants in person and online.

2. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

3. Presentations & Discussion – Community Development

Gina Grandpre, Vice Chair joined the meeting and chaired the balance of the meeting.

a) Riparian Ordinance Panel Discussion

Mike Guymon presented on Salt Lake City's pioneering efforts, noting that it was the first city in Utah to adopt a riparian overlay ordinance. This ordinance applies not only to the Jordan River but also to its tributaries within Salt Lake City boundaries. He explained that the city's efforts began in 2008 in response to intensive development planning near riparian areas, particularly along Emigration Creek. They established buffer zones aligned with the average high water marks of local creeks and the Jordan River. The ordinance employs a tiered system, prohibiting any development within 25 feet of the high water mark and heavily restricting development between 25 and 50-feet for creeks, and up to 100 feet for the Jordan River, where beyond 50 feet, development is permitted under specific conditions. The ordinance includes a detailed table outlining permissible activities and requirements for permits, with Salt Lake City's Public Utilities department serving as the reviewing body for all riparian development permits. Mike emphasized that although past developments are grandfathered in under the ordinance, any new developments must comply fully with the new code.

Mike West presented on Lehi City's approach to riparian preservation. He noted that their ordinance, adopted in 2016 after initial efforts began in 2015, was driven by the rapid growth pressures facing the city. Early in the process, the planning team encountered strong resistance from property owners who had not been informed about the ordinance. In response, the team organized a dedicated public meeting and engaged with property owners individually to find common ground. This outreach led to widespread support for the ordinance by the time it reached the Planning Commission. Lehi's ordinance established a goal of a 300-foot buffer, inspired by the Jordan River Blueprint. While some sections had to be narrowed to 100 feet due to topographic constraints, others expanded to 1,000 feet, with most maintaining the 300-foot target. Permitted uses in the overlay include parks, open space, trails, and certain utility and agricultural functions. Importantly, the ordinance does not require public acquisition of land but does regulate its use to preserve riparian areas.

Mike also shared several examples of implementation, including projects where the buffer zones exceeded the minimum requirements and incorporated conservation easements. The ordinance requires connection points to the Jordan River Trail, as well as the preservation of significant vegetation and trees. He pointed out that while the ordinance was effective in preserving land, future goals include improving environmental quality within the preserved areas, such as removing invasive species, improving vegetation management, and improving water quality.

Gina Grandpre discussed how Saratoga Springs incorporated riparian buffers into its land use code. In 2018, the city revised its code to include definitions for buffers related to both the Jordan River and Utah Lake. The ordinance applies to all properties within 200 feet of the high-water mark. She highlighted that the ordinance was integrated directly into the city's land use regulations and is enforced through those mechanisms. She also noted that it prohibits roadways from being located between the first row of buildings and the waterway. She further noted that landscaping within the riparian and trail setbacks must consist of native or naturalized plant materials that support wildlife. Manicured landscaping and lawns are explicitly prohibited within this area.

Gina inquired about an area shown in a previous image, asking Mike West whether the absence of development was due to a recently implemented 300-foot buffer.

Mike confirmed this, noting that it was part of the Cold Spring Ranch area plan. The developers had chosen to exceed the required open space by clustering more housing and placing additional open areas along the river. This approach helped protect the river while meeting master plan requirements.

Gina acknowledged that Saratoga Springs, while enforcing buffer zones, still sees room for improvement in how those buffers are used. Many undeveloped riverfront areas are wetlands or in floodplains, which pose challenges for development. Zoning codes prohibit some activities in these sensitive areas, which further complicates planning efforts.

Heidi Hoven asked the presenters how they had built momentum for their riparian ordinances. Heidi explained that they were attempting to do something similar on a larger scale around the Great Salt Lake, much of which involves private land.

Gina emphasized the importance of collaboration through entities like the Jordan River Commission and the use of planning tools like the Blueprint Jordan River. She acknowledged the difficulty of gaining political and public support in a development-driven state but stressed the importance of education and outreach.

Heidi also asked about strategies to encourage development away from wetlands, such as through the transfer of development rights.

Gina responded that, to some extent, Saratoga Springs relies on professional planning and the Blueprint to guide such decisions, but it had not yet extensively pursued those kinds of programs.

Soren Simonsen added that the Commission's success came from coordinating across jurisdictions. He noted that the Blueprint serves as a valuable negotiating tool, particularly in areas with decentralized governance. He further explained that although each jurisdiction approaches development differently, the cumulative impact of consistent standards can be significant. He highlighted how neighboring cities like Saratoga Springs and Lehi are making coordinated efforts to preserve riparian corridors and create cohesive recreational and ecological spaces.

Gina agreed, stating that jurisdictions often don't know where to begin when drafting such ordinances. She noted that both the Jordan River Commission and the restructured Utah Lake Authority are helping promote stronger protections, especially upstream, where stormwater management becomes crucial. Despite differences in approach, neighboring cities are implementing natural trail systems that eventually connect, promoting regional cooperation.

Mike West shared that in their case, engagement initially came through opposition. However, once the public was at the table, the city had an opportunity to demonstrate its genuine concern for community values. He stressed the importance of tailoring conversations to the audience, whether developers or private landowners.

Mike said that framing the ordinance as a stewardship effort for future generations helped gain support and made a difference in moving the ordinance forward.

Soren noted that the Commission is exploring the development of model ordinances, which draw from some existing examples. They are currently seeking opportunities to fund this project.

b) “Altitude” Development in South Jordan

Nate Shipp and Krisel Travis, with DAI Utah, provided a brief presentation and update of a planned residential development project proposal in South Jordan, which borders the Jordan River and the Jordan River Migratory Bird Reserve south of Shields Lane. Nate noted that preserving the Jordan River is a significant priority for DAI as a development company. Nate acknowledged the tension that often accompanies development and emphasized the company's commitment to environmental sensitivity and responsible change. He introduced the “Altitude” project, located on the east bank of the Jordan River just south of 1,000 South, on land owned for generations by the Harrison family. Nate highlighted that Ty Harrison had been a longtime advocate for the preservation and remediation of the Jordan River, and that the development team had been asked by the family to honor Ty's legacy by treating the land with care.

The city of South Jordan had expressed interest in balancing environmental concerns with the growing need for housing, especially given the site's proximity to a transit-oriented development (TOD) zone near a FrontRunner station. Nate described the unique challenges of the site, which include sensitive topography, delineated wetlands, and the potential for a trail and river crossing.

Krisel explained that South Jordan lacks a specific buffer ordinance to guide river-adjacent development, which required the team to make independent judgments to achieve a balanced outcome. The site includes a designated Natural Pursuits Preserve and lies partially within a floodplain. The team's solution was to cluster the development further up the hill, allowing for both floodplain avoidance and natural space preservation.

The development will include three housing types: rear- and front-loaded townhomes and four-story stacked flat condominiums. While the TOD zone could have supported taller structures, the Harrison family preferred a project that aligned with their heritage and memories of the land. In the end, the preserved natural area increased from four acres to 6.5 acres, with all buildings located outside of the floodplain. Only roadways and parking lots will touch the floodplain, and building structures will remain approximately 300 feet from the riverbank.

Krisel noted that the team hopes to reestablish the original oxbow wetland area using stormwater detention and native vegetation. Additionally, a memorial space for the Harrison family and a trail connection to a bridge over the river are part of the design, enabling better connectivity between the west side and the transit station.

Dan Potts suggested that DAI seek to emulate more natural appearances rather than manicured spaces.

Dan McBride raised concerns about the extensive removal needed for invasive species like Russian olives and phragmites in the proposed wetland area.

Krisel confirmed that the development budget includes funding for this work and that they are seeking additional support for restoration planting. When asked about long-term mitigation plans, she explained that a homeowners association and a joint common area committee would manage and maintain the natural areas, as the property includes both rental and owned units and is intended to be held long-term.

Eric McCulley reported that he had also worked in the area and with Ty and offered his expertise on riparian habitat and invasive species management. He encouraged the team to consider deer movement patterns and potential issues with allowing dogs near the sensitive bird refuge. He shared stories about Ty's early life experiences on the property and offered to meet on-site to provide further insights.

Soren added that Jens Ammon, the Jordan River Restoration Coordinator, would be another valuable resource. He also emphasized Eric's expertise and experience, noting that he has been a tremendous resource for many

Jordan River riparian restoration projects. He thanked DAI for their balance of environmental considerations and sustainable development, and the addition of new workforce housing to address housing scarcity issues.

4. Committee Business

a) [Action Item] Consider Adopting March 20, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Laura Haskell moved to adopt the March 20, 2025, meeting minutes. Angelo Calacino seconded the motion.

There was no further discussion of the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved by the Committee members present.

b) Upcoming Meetings:

(Tentative) May 1, 2025 – 10:00 AM : Commission field trip

(Tentative) May 15, 2025 – 2:00 PM : Committee field trip

Thursday, June 19, 2025 – 2:00 PM : Regular Committee Meeting, Water & Watershed Focus

Soren Simonsen explained that the May 1, 2025, field trip is expected to focus on the Oquirrh Mountain watershed, provided the necessary arrangements can be completed in time. The May 15, 2025, field trip will center around stormwater management efforts. The Committee has been collaborating closely with the stormwater coalitions in Salt Lake, Utah, and Davis Counties to organize this event. Although planning is ongoing, the May 15th field trip will highlight some of the innovative and effective stormwater management initiatives taking place in those regions.

5. Commission Staff Report(s)

a) Brief Staff Updates

This item was postponed due to time constraints.

6. Jordan River Parkway Design Guidelines Discussion

c) Design Guidelines Overview

Soren Simonsen provided a brief overview of the Design Guidelines document and its purpose. The motivation behind the effort stems from the fact that the Parkway spans 19 local governments, each with its own approach to development. He noted that currently, sections of the trail vary widely in design. However, there has been some progress towards standardization. Consistent wayfinding signage, mile markers, and trailhead kiosks have been installed and are still being implemented.

Bench Donation

Lynn Larsen, Vice President of the Jordan River Foundation, provided a brief presentation discussing the Foundation's funding, which it would like to use to donate benches to be placed along the Parkway. Established in 1979, the Foundation has played a significant role in facilitating development along the Jordan River, particularly in the creation of the Jordan River Trail and the broader river corridor. The organization has been actively involved in clean-up efforts and tall poppy planning.

Lynn noted that many municipalities along the river have participated in the Foundation's signage program. With current design guidelines progressing well, the Foundation is now looking to expand its efforts to include the installation of benches along the trail. The existing guidelines identify two bench types: one for trailheads, which allows for more local flexibility, and another, more clearly defined trail bench. The Foundation is interested in supporting the installation of these benches using a similar agreement structure as the signage program. He asked for municipalities to reach out to finalize details.

Bruce Holyoak asked about the types of benches being used and whether a brochure exists outlining the options. He also inquired whether the benches would feature the Jordan River Foundation logo or allow for customization by the cities.

Lynn replied that there are a few bench types and stated that while the Foundation has not traditionally placed their logo on signs, they would look into options for recognition that might include city or funder names as well.

Dan Potts suggested including smaller benches near fishing areas along the river. He emphasized the value of these minimalistic benches, especially for anglers, noting that they do not need to be elaborate or include backrests.

Lynn and others acknowledged the idea and considered it within the broader scope of improving fishing access.

Eric McCulley highlighted that powder-coated benches are preferable to vinyl-coated ones due to issues with peeling and graffiti management. He emphasized the importance of easy maintenance and strategic placement, including potential installations in shaded areas and those with scenic views, such as birdwatching spots. An example from West Jordan was cited, where benches with shade structures were recently installed. Participants also noted the potential to plant shade-providing trees and shrubs near benches, drawing from successful examples in Riverton. He noted that care should be taken to avoid plant overgrowth that might interfere with the bench areas.

d) Lighting Design Research

A University of Utah Capstone class shared a completed case study and policy recommendations related to “Dark Sky” lighting efforts, along with a resource guide with best practice ideas for lighting fixtures. Four students, Caden Baines, Arthur Shraer Frankich, Jessica Casers, and Tayler Allen, joined the group to present the findings of their capstone project from the university’s Dark Sky Studies program. The team chose two sites to use for a case study, which were General Holm Park in South Salt Lake and East Riverfront Park in South Jordan.

Tayler described the unique features of each location. Jessica then took over to discuss the implications of lighting from a safety perspective. She highlighted concerns about glare, referencing an example from a photograph where glare obscured a person near a car, making the individual almost invisible. She noted that this issue was particularly evident at East Riverfront Park, where the trail was essentially unlit and not visible from nearby structures. She emphasized that such conditions present safety risks for park users. They found significant light trespass at East Riverfront Park, and much of the trail area remained poorly illuminated.

Arthur provided a more detailed analysis of their sky quality measurements, explaining that they used these metrics to assess the impact of light trespass on the visibility of the night sky. According to Dark Sky standards, a reading above 21 is considered ideal for night sky visibility, and all of their readings fell below that threshold. Referencing guidelines from DarkSky International, Arthur explained that recommended color temperatures for outdoor lighting should range between 2000 to 3000 Kelvin, with illuminance ideally between 100 to 200 lux, ranges that both case study sites failed to meet.

Caden described the practical lighting guide they put together as a major deliverable of their project. This guide includes a curated list of dark sky-compliant lighting fixtures, with detailed specifications such as manufacturer names, model numbers, wattage, and color temperature. Arthur emphasized that the guide was created to support cities and communities, especially parks and planning departments, as they navigate lighting upgrades or new installations in compliance with emerging dark sky regulations. Estimated costs for retrofitting all lights at General Holm Park and East Riverfront Park were approximately \$1,600 and \$1,100, respectively, not including labor. The guide also includes budget-friendly solutions such as retrofit filters for existing bulbs and options for full fixture replacements, offering flexibility for municipalities with varying financial capacities.

The lighting guide is currently undergoing final review by the group's professor and will be made publicly available the following week. The group thanked the committee for their time and opened the floor for questions.

Gina Grandpre asked what the source of the light trespass is near East Riverfront Park. Caden replied that it comes from office buildings.

Bruce Holyoak offered feedback and shared Murray's plan to install lighting along a section of the Jordan River trail. They expressed support for following Dark Sky guidelines and mentioned a solar light with motion sensors that their city planned to implement. He raised concerns about pole height recommendations, noting that practical experience revealed vandalism issues at a height of 10 to 12. Their lighting supplier recommended increasing the height to 14 feet to deter tampering. The lights under consideration were 3000 Kelvin, but could potentially be reduced to 2700 Kelvin for better compliance with Dark Sky principles.

Gina noted that a main consideration would be to ensure that the lights are off, if possible, at night during peak migration times. She responded that the guidelines could be flexible.

Bruce also noted that they are looking at installing motion sensors, which would not pick up on birds or other small wildlife.

Soren suggested that it may be valuable for the Commission to conduct an inventory of lighting along the Parkway.

e) Lighting & Fishing Access Work Group Updates

Ren Griffeth presented draft materials from the two Committee work groups focused on fishing access and lighting. Ren began by expressing appreciation for the student group's progress on the project and the opportunity to engage with them throughout the process. She also extended thanks to several members of the technical advisory committee who have been instrumental in supporting the project.

Ren provided an overview of the updated lighting design guidelines, which begin with an introduction emphasizing the importance of reducing light pollution for both human health and wildlife preservation. The document includes general recommendations aligned with Dark Sky principles and is supplemented with graphics depicting responsible lighting practices, as well as examples of acceptable and unacceptable fixtures.

A new section had been added on the economic benefits of reducing lighting intensity and frequency, highlighting how tools like dimmers and motion sensors can significantly lower energy costs. Ren also presented example ordinances from similarly sized urban areas that have adopted dark sky-compliant policies. Additional considerations in the guidelines addressed safety and site-specific needs along the river, advocating for CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) strategies, such as smart lighting and directional shielding. The guidelines also touch on special considerations for diverse environments along the river, including trail intersections, bridges, dense developments, and natural areas, with attention to issues like light reflection off water surfaces.

Soren suggested including case studies from communities such as Saratoga Springs, which have established lighting standards. Gina had previously noted this as well, and Ren confirmed they would look into including those examples.

Ren then discussed the draft lighting ordinances, intended as recommendations for municipalities along the river. The document outlines the ordinance's purpose, scope, definitions, and design suggestions focused on enhancing safety through environmental features like clear sightlines rather than excessive lighting. Standards addressed in the draft include light curfews, with guidelines to turn off or dim lighting after business hours, with exceptions for safety-related illumination and active recreational events. Fixture design recommendations also align with dark sky standards. She invited participants to leave comments on the shared documents via the provided links.

Ren then provided a brief overview of the fishing access design guidelines. These guidelines address environmental impacts, safety, accessibility, sustainable materials, and user amenities. Dan Potts had noted that many of the recommendations were especially applicable to fishing platforms. The group also decided to create a tool for evaluating existing fishing access sites, which would help the Commission understand current conditions and identify areas for improvement.

Ren explained that this evaluation tool includes both a digital spreadsheet and an online survey version, allowing for standardized data collection on site quality, amenities, and safety. It includes a scoring system for both positive and negative attributes to provide a general assessment of each site's quality and inform potential future enhancements, such as educational signage or interactive features like QR-code surveys.

Dan Potts asked about incorporating fishing access into the Emerald Ribbon Action Plan.

Makaylah Maponga, who had managed the Emerald Ribbon Action Plan, offered her perspective, noting that while fishing access hadn't been a major focus of the plan, it could be incorporated into the concept of standardized rest stops. These rest stops could include features like benches, trash cans, signage, and potentially fishing amenities. Dan emphasized the value of adding slightly off-trail benches, citing recommendations from Eric McCulley, and highlighting how this would benefit the community.

Ren asked attendees to take a couple of weeks to review the materials, identify any gaps or areas requiring further attention, and provide constructive feedback by May 9, 2025.

Soren emphasized that the design guidelines document is intended to be a living document, one that can evolve. The goal is to develop a resource that can inform planning for a variety of future improvements, amenities, and infrastructure projects, such as resurfacing trails or building bridges. The document is intended to serve as a practical and accessible reference that reflects the best practices of the Blueprint Jordan River initiative.

7. Adjourn

Dan Potts moved to adjourn the meeting. Jason Erekson seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:08 PM.

A meeting recording, presentation, handout materials, and meeting minutes are available at <https://www.utah.gov/pmn/sitemap/notice/984085.html>.

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

Adopted June 26, 2025.