

Utah Board of Water Resources
Board Briefing and Action Meeting
January 29, 2026
8:30 AM
Department of Natural Resources
1594 W. North Temple
Salt Lake City, UT 84114

CHAIR MIKE DAVIS called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM, introduced himself. Board members present and those online introduced themselves. Excused Board members BLAINE IPSON and TIM HAWKES.

ACTING DIRECTOR JOEL WILLIAMS introduced the staff present.

DISCUSSION OF BOARD PROJECTS:

<u>Project #</u>	<u>Applicant</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Project Manager</u>
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FEASIBILITY REPORTS:

RE502	Farm Creek Irrigation Company	Duchesne	Brad Caldwell
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BRAD CALDWELL presented the report and the board discussed the proposed repayment terms.

RE503	Elberta Water Company	Utah	Ethan Stayner
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ETHAN STAYNER presented the report and the applicant answered the board's questions about their ability to repay the funding and ownership of the water rights for the project.

COMMITTAL OF FUNDS:

RE475	Hyrum Blacksmith Fork Irr Co	Cache	Ethan Stayner
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ETHAN STAYNER presented the report.

RE494	Washington County WCD	Washington	Ben Marett
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BEN MARETT presented the report, highlighting that only a part of the authorized funding is being committed at this time. The board also discussed visiting the project while in St. George in March.

RE500 **Smithfield Irrigation Company** **Cache** **Ann Baynard**

ANN BAYNARD presented the report.

RM117 **Lehi City** **Utah** **Ethan Stayner**

ETHAN STAYNER presented the report.

JULIETTE TENNERT was excused at 9:33. There is still a quorum present.

BRIEFING INFORMATION TO THE BOARD:

JOEL WILLIAMS introduced new staff member RUSSELL FILLMORE, Finance Manager.

STATUS OF FUNDS:

SHALAINE DEBERNARDI presented the report.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

JOEL WILLIAMS discussed the division's Bill Tracker 2026 and highlighted some of the bills that will affect Water Resources.

ATTORNEY GENERAL UPDATE:

SARAH SHECHTER, stated that we're working to update the board's guidelines and she helped with the new format for this meeting. She requested feedback on the changes. Additionally, regarding the Great Salt Lake litigation, we are still in the fact discovery phase. Since we weren't a named defendant, but did intervene, we do have a lot of the information the plaintiffs are seeking and are working with other agencies to produce that information. She also answered board questions about the process and timeline ahead.

DIVISION UPDATE:

JOEL WILLIAMS

Our staff is currently hard at work on the State Water Plan, which is due at the end of this year. We recently held a workshop at the new Fire Operations Center with the directors of all partner agencies to gather their input and define a shared vision for the plan. As a result of this workshop, the following vision statement was developed: "A safe, reliable water supply that enhances urban and rural communities, supports the economy, and protects and improves the environment now and into the future." The recommendations within the plan will be determined through the lens of three key themes: reliability and resilience, collaboration, and stewardship. The team is working to prepare a draft for review by mid-March. Although the final plan is not due until the end of the year, we are prioritizing an early draft to allow ample time for the necessary reviews, input, and revisions required for publication. We will make this draft available to the Board for your review as soon as it is ready.

A few updates regarding the Unified Water Infrastructure Plan. The team recently presented a draft of the plan at the Utah Watershed Council meeting. Comments from the council are due by the end of this month, after which the team will compile the final report by March 1st. Additionally, they presented to the Legislative Water Development Commission over the last few weeks.

From our conservation section, during 2025, over 2.7 million square feet of grass was replaced through state funds provided in partnership with water conservancy districts to make these rebates possible. The team has also been hosting popular water-wise webinars to educate the public on home landscaping practices. Additionally, they have been teaching Localscapes classes throughout the state and participating in various community events. Some of the upcoming events: they will be attending the Rural Water Users Association conference and the Cache home and garden show up in Logan which will be March 20th and 21st.

Cloud Seeding update, we are fully operational including the new remote ground-based generators and the drone program. We just need more clouds to come through for us to seed. We're hopeful that mother nature accepts this challenge.

The Great Salt Lake Basin Integrated Plan, they're continuing to work on the studies. The main goal is to gather data and information that can help us make more informed decisions and this will be a useful tool. A draft is due at the end of this year.

Regarding the Colorado River, the Department of the Interior has released the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which outlines five key alternatives: No Action, Basic Coordination, Enhanced Coordination, Maximum Operational Flexibility, and Supply Driven. The seven basin states are obviously still working furiously and meeting regularly. They have the deadline of February 14th to have an agreement. Perspectives on the feasibility of the deadline vary depending on who you ask; however, it has been expressed as a firm date. I know that the Colorado River Authority is currently busy reviewing the draft and preparing a state response.

BEN MARETT asked the board for clarification about touring Washington County WCD's project in March. Most agreed that Wednesday following the board meeting would be best.

BRIAN STEED moved for a recess. DALE BUXTON seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

MEETING RECESSED AT 10:11 AM AND WILL RECONVENE AT 10:30 AM

CHAIR MIKE DAVIS ended brief recess at 10:31 AM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

DALE BUXTON moved to approve the minutes from the December 9, 2025 Board meeting. DANA VAN HORN seconded the motion. BRIAN STEED returned late from recess and abstained from this vote. All others voted in favor and the motion passed.

NRCS SNOW REPORT:

JORDAN CLAYTON presented a snow survey update.

BOARD ACTIONS:

RE502 Farm Creek Irrigation Company

WILLIAM MERKLEY moved the board authorize 8.7% of the project cost, up to \$435,000, and that the project be purchased at 0% interest over 20 years with annual payments of approximately \$21,750. DALE BUXTON seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

RE503 Elberta Water Company

DANA VAN HORN moved the board authorize 85% of the project cost, up to \$98,000, and that the project be purchased at 0% interest over 15 years with annual payments of approximately \$6,500. DALE BUXTON seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

RE475 Hyrum Blacksmith Fork Irrigation Company

DALE BUXTON moved the board commit 49.6% of the project cost, up to \$228,000, and that the project be purchased at 0% interest over 15 years with annual payments of approximately \$15,200. BRIAN STEED seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

RE494 Washington County Water Conservancy Dist.

SPENCER JONES moved the board commit 68.5% of Phase IA, up to \$66,133,000, and that the bonded indebtedness be returned at 0.5% interest over 40 years with annual payments of approximately \$1,879,000 (including reserves). DANA VAN HORN seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

RE500 Smithfield Irrigation Company

DALE BUXTON moved the board commit 30.7% of the project cost, up to \$952,000, and that the project be purchased at 0% interest over 25 years with annual payments of approximately \$38,100. BRIAN STEED seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

RM117 Lehi City

DANA VAN HORN moved the board commit 29.75% of the project cost, up to \$1,690,000, as a loan, and that the bonded indebtedness be returned at 1% interest over 15 years, with annual

payments of approximately \$131,000 (including reserves). BRIAN STEED seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

GREAT SALT LAKE MARINA DREDGING PROJECT REPORT:

PATRICK CAMPANA presented the report to the board, highlighting the need, obstacles and successful outcomes of the project.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

JOEL WILLIAMS provided all updates earlier, so nothing additional to report. He did express appreciation to the board and staff for improvements to the process and materials for this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

DANA VAN HORN moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:09 AM.