

Utah Board of Water Resources
Board Briefing and Action Meeting
March 18, 2026, 1:30 PM
Holiday Inn St. George Convention Center
1808 Crosby Way, St. George, Utah 84790

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

CHAIR MIKE DAVIS called the meeting to order at 1:31 PM, introduced himself and the Board members introduced themselves.

DIRECTOR JOEL WILLIAMS introduced himself and the staff present.

NRCS SNOW REPORT:

JORDAN CLAYTON presented a snow survey update.

DISCUSSION OF BOARD PROJECTS:

<u>Project Number</u>	<u>Applicant</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Project Manager</u>
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COMMITTAL OF FUNDS:

RE469 Grantsville Irrigation Company		Tooele	Ann Baynard
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ANN BAYNARD presented the report.

RE490 Clinton City		Davis	Ann Baynard
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ANN BAYNARD presented the report.

MAYOR MARIE DOHERTY thanked the Board for their consideration.

DANA VAN HORN asked for an update on the project's progress, specifically regarding whether roadwork has commenced and if the timeline is working for all involved.

BRYCE WILCOX confirmed that the project is underway and proceeding according to schedule. The City's payments are scheduled quarterly toUDOT,and everything is working according to plan.

RE503 Elberta Water Company **Utah** **Ethan Stayner**

ETHAN STAYNER presented the report.

RM129 Weber-Box Elder Conservation District **Weber** **Ann Baynard**

ANN BAYNARD presented the report.

RM130 South Ogden Conservation District **Weber** **Ann Baynard**

ANN BAYNARD presented the report.

TIM HAWKES commented about the importance of metering and informing the public about their use, and thanked the districts for their efforts.

JEFF HUMPHREY and MARCUS KELLER expressed appreciation to the board for their favorable funding terms and staff for their assistance in the process.

SPECIAL ITEMS:

RM067 Wolf Creek Irrigation Company **Weber** **Ben Marett**

BEN MARETT presented the report.

DEE STAPLES expressed appreciation to the board for their help both in the past and currently.

RE493 Dry Gulch Irrigation Company **Duchesne** **Marisa Egbert**

RM051 Richards Irrigation Company **Salt Lake** **Ben Marett**

RM064 Paradise Irrigation Company **Cache** **Marisa Egbert**

BRIEFING INFORMATION TO THE BOARD:

STATUS OF FUNDS:

SHALAINE DEBERNARDI presented the report.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

DIRECTOR JOEL WILLIAMS I would like to provide a quick legislative update. Since we're talking about dam safety funds, we did finally get an additional appropriation of \$6.2 million. When combined with our existing \$3.8 million, this provides a total of \$10 million annually for dam safety. These funds will be transferred from the C&D fund into the Revolving Construction Fund for use. This increase is much needed, as project costs have risen over the years and the previous \$3.8 million allocation was no longer sufficient to keep pace. This will help us stay better on top of the projects as they come up each year.

While many of the most interesting bills did not pass, there were several significant ones that did. Specifically, House Bill 296, sponsored by Representative Hoang Nguyen, was successful this year after failing to pass last year. This legislation updates water conservation plans to allow water providers the option to commit water to the Great Salt Lake as a conservation measure.

House Bill 313 from Representative John Arthur updates landscaper certification requirements. Professionals will now be required to complete six hours of training, including at least one hour focused on water conservation landscaping principles and one hour on fire risk management landscaping principles. These updates were well-received when presented to the Utah Water Task Force.

House Bill 473 from Representative Scott Chew moves the Colorado River Authority from the Governor's Office to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Our team is looking forward to welcoming them into the DNR family and beginning our work together. We have already been working closely with them, but I believe our collaboration will be further enhanced now that we are part of the same department.

The board is expanding from seven to ten members. Under this new structure:

- The Commissioner now holds an official voting seat.
- The Water Resources Director is also a voting member.
- The southeast portion of the state will get their own representative (instead of Water Resources director).
- The State Engineer and the Director of the Department of Natural Resources will serve as non-voting members.

Additionally, the bill clarified who may not serve as the Colorado River Commissioner. Specifically, it stipulates that the Director of the Department of Natural Resources, the State Engineer, and the Director of Water Resources are all ineligible to hold that position. Senate Bill 46, Water Wise Landscaping Amendments, sponsored by Senator Stratton. The bill defines "functional turf," which we believe may complicate the topic. It is widely understood that there are many appropriate uses for grass; therefore, we feel it would be more effective to define "non-functional turf" instead. By defining specific areas where grass should not be used, such as park strips and parking lot islands, there would be greater clarity and it would better support our water conservation goals. We

will continue to monitor the progress and see where it goes. For this year it only applies to state properties.

Senate Bill 252, sponsored by Senator Pitcher, focuses on ensuring state agencies implement efficient water and irrigation systems. Starting May 6th, any new state facility must install irrigation systems with a distribution uniformity of 75% or greater. While this is a high standard to achieve, the Department of Facilities and Construction Management (DFCM) co-presented on the bill and has committed to meeting this requirement for new state properties. Additionally, any new grass areas on these properties must utilize low-water-use turf as certified by Utah State University. This bill represents a positive step forward in allowing the state to lead by example in water conservation efforts.

As I mentioned, several notable bills did not pass this legislative session. Despite receiving strong support in committee and from both the Senate and the House, several water conservation bills did not make it across the finish line. This year, over a thousand pieces of legislation were introduced, and approximately half were successful. Among those that did not pass were a water loss study in HB 154. HB 155 which encouraged tiered conservation rates. HB 328 which would have defined non-functional turf. Despite strong support from water conservancy districts, many positive comments, passing both committees, Senator Stratton introduced a Senate substitute that changed the definition from "non-functional turf" to "functional turf." The bill failed in that form. We plan to try again next year to establish a "non-functional turf" definition that will help the state prioritize water use for appropriate areas. HB 349 would have modified the board's authority for funding dam and reservoir projects. While the board already has the authority to receive applications for new or expanded reservoirs, the original bill would have allowed the board to utilize the Water Infrastructure Restricted Account (WIRA). Currently, WIRA is limited to a specific list of five or six uses; this bill would have expanded that list to include dams and reservoirs. At a certain point in the session the bill was substituted to remove that specific authority. However, it still tasked the board with evaluating potential reservoirs and reporting annually to the legislature on the number of applications received. In the end the bill did not pass, though it made for some interesting discussion.

There was the airborne chemical amendments bill, which we were involved in due to the need to distinguish between cloud seeding and concerns regarding chemtrails. The bill clearly defined the distinction between the two, explicitly stating that the activities associated with chemtrail theories would be illegal, while clarifying that cloud seeding is a separate, regulated practice. For the second year in a row, however, the bill did not pass. While this could be viewed as a win for science, it is a missed opportunity for our office. The passage of this bill would have provided us with a helpful tool when responding to residents concerned about our cloud seeding program. It would have

allowed us to clarify that the activities they are worried about are indeed illegal and distinct from our actual operations.

Attorney General Update:

SARAH SCHECTER will provide an update regarding the Great Salt Lake litigation during a closed session in the next portion of the meeting, which will allow her to advise the Board under attorney-client privilege.

The legislature appropriated \$5 million for litigation regarding the Great Salt Lake and the Colorado River. Water Horse is completely resolved so we will no longer have to talk about it.

DANA VAN HORN moved for a recess. JULIETTE TENNERT seconded the motion. Meeting recessed at 2:27 PM and will reconvene at 2:45 PM.

CHAIR MIKE DAVIS ended brief recess at 2:46 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

DANA VAN HORN moved to approve the minutes from the January 29, 2026 Board meeting. SPENCER JONES seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

BOARD ACTIONS:

RE469 Grantsville Irrigation Company

JULIETTE TENNERT moved the board commit 85% of the project cost, up to \$1,496,000, and that the project be purchased at 1% interest over 30 years, with annual payments of approximately \$58,000. BRIAN STEED seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

RE490 Clinton City

TIM HAWKES moved the board commit 85% of the project cost, up to \$3,900,000, and that the bonded indebtedness be returned at 3.09% interest over 15 years, with annual payments of approximately \$356,000 (including reserves). BLAINE IPSON seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

RE503 Elberta Water Company

DANA VAN HORN moved the board commit 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.

RM129 Weber-Box Elder Conservation District

TIM HAWKES moved the board commit up to \$7,737,000 as a loan, and that the bonded indebtedness be returned at 1% interest over 15 years, with annual payments of approximately \$600,000 (including reserves). BRIAN STEED seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

RM130 South Ogden Conservation District

TIM HAWKES moved the board commit up to \$1,584,000 as a loan, and that the bonded indebtedness be returned at 1% interest over 15 years, with annual payments of approximately \$123,000 (including reserves). BRIAN STEED seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

RM067 Wolf Creek Irrigation Company

TIM HAWKES moved the board commit an additional \$42,330 and amend the purchase agreement to state the board will provide 30.7% of the project cost, up to \$174,930, and that the project be purchased at 1% interest over 15 years, with annual payments of approximately \$12,600. SPENCER JONES seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

WITHDRAWALS:

RE493 Dry Gulch Irrigation Company

RM051 Richards Irrigation Company

RM064 Paradise Irrigation Company

SPENCER JONES moved that RE493 Dry Gulch Irrigation Company, RM051 Richards Irrigation Company, and the loan funds for RM064 Paradise Irrigation Company be withdrawn from further consideration by the Board. WILLIAM MERKLEY seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

JOEL WILLIAMS welcomed MARISA EGBERT.

MARISA EGBERT updated the Board about the new ADA rules. We're overhauling our board report templates for ADA accessibility. The goal is to make sure screen readers can properly read everything, and we need to be ready by the end of April. Privacy updates are happening for contact info. Since we do everything digitally now, we're swapping out addresses (including personal home addresses on applications) for just

email addresses and phone numbers. Shout-out to the compliance team! Becky Holt and Summer Dawn Shumway are leading the charge across the office to make sure we're in compliance.

JOEL WILLIAMS presented his report.

State Water Plan update, a draft is coming out "next week" for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) directors to review. You can expect a draft for a wider audience to be released in May. After that, it will be put out for public comment. The final goal is to have the plan published by the end of this year.

Conservation updates, the Governor's "Built Here" initiative aims for 75% of state residents to live in an area with water-wise ordinances, qualifying them for an incentive program to fund water-wise landscaping. We are currently at 65%. We are seeking more cities to join, and West Point City recently adopted the qualifying ordinances, making them eligible. Blanding and Centerville are considering ordinances. We are happy to go out and meet with anyone if they have questions about this. The goal is to reach 75% water efficiency by 2029. We are hosting webinars taught by water resources staff and experts, focusing on residential water efficiency. The next one that will be coming up is about the Department of Agriculture and Food's Pollinator Program. The Transparent Water billing application opened on March 16th and will be open through May 15th. For water providers interested in help with their billing program and better communication with water users of explaining their water use to them.

The Great Salt Lake Basin Integrated Plan is currently working on a draft integrated water plan, expected by the end of this year, despite some discussion about its alignment with the overall Integrated Plan. The final Great Salt Lake Basin Integrated Plan, which incorporates a basinwide model developed with the Bureau of Reclamation, is scheduled for completion by the end of 2027.

ERIC DIXON Unified Water Infrastructure Plan (UWIP) update. The plan has been finalized and is on the division's website. Also the Utah Project Portal has been open since November, and that's where entities can come and put their projects in anytime and update them whenever they want. A new annual submission deadline will be set for water project inclusion in agency annual plans, including the Division of Water Resources. While the annual plan updates yearly, submissions are currently rolling. The next board meeting will include a 10-15 minute presentation on the impact of the UWIP to the board's process. The goal is a seamless transition with minimal process changes. The intent is to compile a 20-year overview of all state water infrastructure projects to proactively anticipate funding needs. Submissions will be distributed to the three relevant agencies: Water Resources, Drinking Water, and Water Quality. The

submission process will largely follow historical procedures, with minor initial adjustments. A clearer update will be provided at the May board meeting.

BLAINE IPSON I move to go into a Closed Session to discuss pending or reasonably imminent litigation, Utah Code Section 52-4-205(1)(c). DANA VAN HORN seconded the motion. Roll call vote was held. All Board members voted in favor of a closed session.

BRIAN STEED moved to return to open meeting. BLAINE IPSON seconded All in favor of an open session.

CHAIR MIKE DAVIS We are out of closed session and back into regular session. No action was taken.

JULIETTE TENNERT wanted to recognize DIRECTOR JOEL WILLIAMS and that this is his first official meeting as Director.

ADJOURNMENT:

JULIETTE TENNERT moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:50 PM. All voted in favor.

THOSE PRESENT

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Chair Mike Davis
Vice Chair Dana Van Horn
Juliette Tennert
Dale Buxton
William Merkley
Brian Steed
Spencer Jones
Blaine Ipson
Tim Hawkes

STAFF PRESENT

Director Joel Williams
Assistant Director Shalaine DeBernardi
Marisa Egbert
Ann Baynard
Ben Marett
Ethan Stayner
Shannon Clough
Eric Dixon
Brad Caldwell (online)
Sarah Shechter, Attorney General's Office
AV Team Paul Gedge, Carmen McDonald (online)

OTHERS

Jordan Clayton, Snow Survey Supervisor, NRCS
Elise Mondragon, Office Manager (outgoing), Grantsville Irrigation Company (online)
Rhonda Peterson, Office Manager (incoming), Grantsville Irrigation Company (online)
Bodee Paulick, Grantsville Irrigation Company (online)
Marie Dougherty, Mayor, Clinton City (online)
David Williams, Public Works Director, Clinton City (online)
Bryce Wilcox, J-U-B Engineers
Bill Ford, President, Elberta Water Company
Jeff Humphrey, General Manager, Weber-Box Elder Conservation District and South Ogden Conservation District
Marcus Keller, Crews & Associates

Dee Staples, President, Wolf Creek Irrigation Company (online)

EJ Harris, Secretary/Treasurer, Wolf Creek Irrigation Company (online)