

Jordan River Commission Jordan River Watershed Council Meeting

December 4, 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 virtually via Zoom

Meeting Attendees

Watershed Council Members

Ali Avery, North Salt Lake
Commissioner Skyler Beltran, Utah County
Tim Brown, Tracy Aviary
Councilmember Silvia Catten, Millcreek
Commissioner John Crofts, Davis County
Amanda Covington, Larry H Miller Company
Cory Fralick, West Jordan (Alternate)
Gina Grandpre, Saratoga Springs (Alternate)
Mayor Dustin Gettel, Midvale
Lisa Hartman, Salt Lake County Mayor's Office (Alternate)
Bruce Holyoak, Murray (Alternate)
Michael Horrocks, Wasatch Rowing Foundation
Councilmember Bryn Johnson, Draper
Brad Knoles, Rocky Mountain Power
Holly Lopez, Salt Lake Department of Public Utilities (Alternate)
Todd Munger, Lehi (Alternate)
Betty Naylor, Gardner Heritage Farms
Rachel Otto, Salt Lake City (Alternate)
Mayor Kristie Overson, Taylorsville
Scott Peters, Jordan River Foundation (Alternate)
Councilmember Don Shelton, South Jordan
Councilmember Alison Stroud, Sandy
Craig Thaxton, Jordan River Foundation
Councilmember Clarissa Williams, South Salt Lake

Watershed Council Advisors

Sam Braegger, Utah Lake Authority
Benn Buys, Utah Fairpark Area Investment & Restoration (UFAIR) District
Senator Lincoln Fillmore, Utah Legislature
Ajla Hadzialijagic, Utah Governor's Office (Alternate)
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

Commission Staff

Ren Griffeth, Administrative, Grant & Research Specialist
Caroline Johnston, Event & Volunteer Coordinator
Rachel Lyn, Communications & Outreach Manager
Amelia Miller, Communications & Outreach Intern
Frances Schneider, Education Programs Intern
Soren Simonsen, Executive Director & Secretary

Visitors and Guests

Ryan Anderson, Salt Lake County
Brandon Biederman, PORT
Angelo Calacino, Salt Lake County
Dave Epstein, Jacobs Construction
Lorie Fowlke, Office of Senator John Curtis
Jon Glenn, Chair, Event Advisory Committee
Laura Haskell, Utah Division of Water Resources
Sharen Hauri, South Salt Lake (Alternate)
Aspen Johnston, Office of Great Salt Lake Commissioner
Lauren Littlefield, Salt Lake County
Irene Lysenko, Wasatch Rowing Foundation (Alternate)
Eric McCulley, McCulley Watershed Consulting Services
Emily Paskett, Salt Lake County
Christine Richman, GSBS Consulting
Zack Shepherd, Office of Congresswoman Celeste Maloy
Bob Thompson, Salt Lake County
Dallen Webster, Barr
Kyle Wilson, Office of Congresswoman Celeste Maloy
Sandy Wingert, Utah Division of Water Quality (Alternate)
Will Younger, PROS Consulting
Josh Zimmerman, Utah Division of Water Resources

Meeting Minutes

Soren Simonsen, Secretary, was delegated to chair the meeting at the request of the Chair and Vice Chair, who were both absent, and called the Watershed Council meeting to order at 10:02 AM.

1. Watershed Council Welcome & Roll Call

Meeting participants were asked to note their attendance using an online meeting attendance form.

2. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

3. Presentations & Discussion

a) Salt Lake County General Plan Water Element Update

Ryan Anderson, Salt Lake County Municipal Program Manager; Lisa Hartman, Salt Lake County Associate Deputy Mayor; and Christine Richman, with GSBS Consulting, presented information about the Water Element of Salt Lake County's General Plan.

Christine began with an overview of the Water Use and Preservation Element, which is designed to amend the three existing general plans for unincorporated Salt Lake County—the Wasatch Canyons, Sandy Hills, and West General Plans. The amendment is necessary to comply with recent state statutes, specifically Utah Code 17-27A-403, by addressing the impacts of water resources on development, coordinating land use and water

planning, and identifying strategies for water reduction. She noted that Salt Lake County is the land use authority, not a water provider, which shapes the nature of the policy and use-based strategies within the plan. The team working on this project includes staff from Salt Lake County, GSBS Consulting for land use and general plan issues, and Bowen and Collins for technical expertise.

Christine explained that the planning process established four key goals:

1. to align growth with sustainable water features,
2. to safeguard source waters and natural systems,
3. to build a culture of water stewardship, and
4. to lead by example in county operations.

Community engagement involved a website for data and public input on conservation, as well as in-person outreach. The element updates General Plans adopted in 2020, 2022, and 2023, with a specific note that the Sandy Hills area, which is an unincorporated island, is slated for annexation into Sandy City by July 2027, and the element's provisions were made consistent with Sandy City's existing water plan.

The plan development involved a thorough analysis of existing conditions, including land ownership, county facilities like parks and golf courses, and projected growth based on future land use designations. Waterways, irrigation systems, current zoning, and agricultural land use were also examined. The unincorporated area was divided into sub-areas, particularly the East and West Canyons, each with a dashboard detailing current water utilization and projecting challenges to future land use based on water availability, thus identifying where conservation strategies are most needed.

Lisa Hartman presented several operation and policy recommendations. They are currently updating Chapter 19 of their ordinances to regulate future water use in new developments, bringing it in line with similar ordinances for outdoor water use. This update is informed by a pilot program that successfully converted turf to water-wise landscaping, or "flipped the strip," at five major county facilities, demonstrating lessons for future ordinances and policies. Other strategies include incorporating water conservation as a consideration in applications for the Corridor Preservation Fund and the Tax Increment Policy. Furthermore, the county plans to audit and upgrade its aging and inefficient irrigation systems, noting that minimal golf course system infrastructure replacements led to a 60% reduction in water use. All county golf course outdoor irrigation uses secondary, not culinary, water. The team also discussed a county turf audit and conversion process, which will focus on training staff to maintain water-wise plantings and ensuring that these conversions are visually appealing to address public resistance. A manual of climate-appropriate, drought-resistant trees and plantings has been developed and is available to other municipalities.

On a regional scale, the plan recommends expanding the Open Space Fund to conserve areas important for watershed health and sensitive landscapes. It also stresses the need for all county departments involved in water issues, such as facilities, flood control, and stormwater, to coordinate and speak with one voice. Finally, the county plans to coordinate more closely with irrigation and canal companies regarding flood control and the stormwater systems of the 16 municipalities with which they interact.

Christine added that next steps for the plan include presentations to the Salt Lake County and Mountain District Planning Commissions later this month, followed by a public hearing and a final adoption vote by the County Council in January.

Michael Horrocks asked about whether the County Council would require any new developments to be completely grass-free, including parking strips. Lisa clarified that the recommendation in the first quarter of next year is to eliminate grass in areas that are not in active use, but not to mandate entirely grass-free developments.

Don Shelton asked about whether the manual of recommended water-wise trees and plantings previously mentioned is available. Lisa confirmed that it is available and has been offered to several city managers.

Christine noted the statewide requirement for jurisdictions to adopt water elements by December 2025, noting that many cities and counties are nearing completion. She suggested that the Watershed Council could help implementation efforts by creating a database of the diverse strategies being adopted across the region.

b) Salt Lake County Integrated Watershed Plan Update

Bob Thompson, Salt Lake County Watershed Section Manager, shared an update on Salt Lake County's Integrated Watershed Plan. He explained that due to Salt Lake County's designation as the Water Quality Planning Authority for its area since 1978, the plan is jurisdictionally limited and cannot extend to the 8 or 9-mile stretch of the Jordan River in Utah County. Bob noted that the plan, which is updated every ten years, is structured into three areas—the northeast, the Bright Canyons, and the southwestern side—to allow for different implementation strategies based on area-specific pollutants of concern.

The plan follows the EPA's 9 Elements Watershed Plan, which is achieved through a six-step process. Bob detailed the process, which involved building partnerships by reaching out to hundreds of stakeholders, collecting a vast amount of data to characterize the watershed, setting goals, and developing an extensive implementation program, which accounts for five of the nine EPA elements. He identified key priority concerns, including E. coli, which has total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) showing impairments in almost all streams. Data analysis of E. coli showed that the real problem stems from non-point source pollution delivered by stormwater runoff from land use, particularly during the recreation season. Other significant concerns driving the implementation strategy include trash and stream stability problems identified through the program's data collection.

To combat these issues, the plan's best management practices (BMPs) focus on solutions like trash facilities, pet waste stations, riparian fencing, Low Impact Development (LID), "don't feed wildlife" signs, and septic improvements in certain areas. An online tool gathered over a thousand inputs from partners, which were compiled into an implementation table and categorized into structural BMPs (physical things to build, like pet waste stations), non-structural BMPs (policies like stream setbacks or ordinances), and education/outreach. The next phase, beginning in 2026, involves measuring progress and making adjustments through a robust monitoring program that includes E. coli, irrigation canal water quality, stream flow gauges, and microbial source tracking. The plan is set to be published by the end of 2025, with a new version anticipated for 2036. Short-term goals include providing updates to the council and identifying priority areas for BMPs, while long-term goals focus on policy changes, engineered wetlands, and working on County Parks.

Dustin Gettel asked if the "don't feed the wildlife" messaging targeted deer or waterfowl. Bob clarified that existing microbial source tracking data indicates waterfowl account for about 80% of stream impairments, so messaging has primarily focused there, but resident deer populations are also a problem in some southwest streams.

Clarissa Williams asked for details on the restoration work, including its nature, who performs it, and who maintains it. Bob explained that the team focuses on natural channel design, using logs and woody debris instead of concrete or riprap. The team takes ownership of the projects for a five-year maintenance period after significant initial weed control (which can take a couple of years or more) before turning maintenance responsibility over to the landowners in perpetuity.

c) Central Jordan River Reconnect Master Plan Update

Brandon Biederman, Associate Principal and Project Manager with the consulting team from PORT, presented an update on the ongoing Master Plan of the Central Jordan River Reconnect project (<https://www.centraljordanreconnect.com>). This project is developing a plan and implementation strategies for the Jordan River and surrounding public lands between 5400 South and Highway 201 in the central Salt Lake Valley. He was joined by Will Younger, Principal with PROS Consulting. They reviewed ideas and recommendations in their current draft form, and reviewed public engagement, investigation, research, and feedback from Salt Lake County and municipal partners.

Brandon provided an overview of the project, which is a conceptual framework plan for the Jordan River Corridor between State Road 201 and 5400 South, aligned with the "Zone" of the Jordan River Recreation Area funding program created by the Utah Legislature. The project is managed by Angelo Calacino from Salt Lake County and involves Brandon's firm, along with Rio ASE and PROS Consulting. Brandon noted the plan is currently in Stage 2, the planned development phase during 2025 and early 2026, following a public

engagement visioning phase in the latter half of 2024. He mentioned a similar presentation is scheduled for the South Salt Lake Planning Commission in the evening, which was also presented to the planning commissions of Millcreek, Murray, Taylorsville and West Valley City in recent weeks.

Brandon highlighted community themes of a connected, active, and healthy river corridor. He also described a set of priorities derived from stakeholder workshops, including active transportation, riparian and ecological function, recreation opportunities, and management and safety. The conceptual framework is driven by system-wide goals:

1. A connected communities including expanding the trail system, improving public and emergency access, and increasing awareness,
2. A healthy river corridor including expanded floodway/floodplain, preserved habitat, improved water quality, with four specific areas for enhancement,
3. An active river including identifying and expanding access for kayaking, boating, and fishing, and building on existing riverside amenities, and
4. Operations and management that includes coordinated oversight for improved maintenance, funding, and cohesive programming.

The plan divides the river into seven character-based segments, with specific proposals for each. These include ecological opportunities at Millrace and Germania Parks, unifying assets at the Little Confluence, a two-trail system around the Freedom Shrine, and creating a neighborhood destination at Four Corners Commons. Other examples include safety improvements and coordination near the Tracy Aviary, developing a county destination park in the largest county-owned land area, and water-based recreation near Redwood Park. Brandon concluded by inviting feedback as they detail the report, and mentioned that an online website for public comments and feedback is launching soon.

Michael Horrocks asked about plans for water recreation. Brandon confirmed that the project list identifies various opportunities, including additional water access points, boat takeouts and launches, and areas for fishing or touching the water, but noted these remain conceptual recommendations within the master plan.

Sharen Hauri asked for the best way for a Commission member to provide feedback, noting she was relaying a question from Clarissa Williams. Angelo Calacino indicated that questions and information can be submitted directly to him at Salt Lake County, or via the upcoming project website, which will also host the document and collect comments.

Sharen also asked Angelo about the future funding and implementation of the projects once the plan is complete. Angelo responded that Salt Lake County would gladly take the lead in working with local jurisdictions and other agencies to pursue all possible funding opportunities. He views it as a team effort for the five jurisdictions, aiming for a final document with solid guidelines to prevent miscommunications.

Brandon added that the plan will include an implementation matrix identifying general budget ranges, a recommended oversight agency, necessary coordination, and potential creative funding sources that PROS Consulting is working to identify.

Soren Simonsen noted that long-term maintenance and capital improvements funding will be a focus of the next Technical Advisory Committee meeting.

d) Utah Legislature General Session Preview and Updates

Soren Simonsen discussed legislative initiatives related to the upcoming 2026 General Session of the Utah Legislature that will convene on January 20, 2026. He welcomed Senator Lincoln Fillmore, the new legislative representative appointed to the Commission's Governing Board.

Senator Fillmore introduced his proposed legislation, which aims to increase water flow to the Great Salt Lake. He expressed hope that his bill would result in increased funds for the restoration of the Jordan River banks and the removal of invasive weeds. The second part of his proposal is to provide river-wide matching funds to municipalities for on-the-water recreational assets, with the state funding half of the capital for building

programs and programming to get people on the water. His end goal is to see the river to become a recreational asset.

Soren highlighted the Jordan River Recreation Area statute, created in 2018, and noted that the existing statute has a specific focus area on the designated Recreation Zone around the Tracy Aviary and the Pamela Atkinson Homeless Resource Center in South Salt Lake. Salt Lake City, despite having significant impacts from homelessness, is excluded from this Recreation Zone, making some funding unavailable to them. He posed the question to the Governing Board whether the Recreation Zone should be expanded, eliminated, or fine-tuned.

Sharen Hauri expressed interest in and appreciate for the Zone related funding, stating that South Salt Lake has worked hard to mitigate impacts of the homeless resource center and needs the funding to invest in recreation and public safety through design and public safety tools. She stressed that she would not want to see the existing funding for this specific zone diluted, as it was tied to mitigating impacts the city deals with daily. She cited the Tracy Aviary as a success story that relies heavily on this funding.

Ben Stireman suggested that the need for funding is river-wide and not just limited to the current Zone. He advocated for putting the money where it is needed most and rethinking the funding process, suggesting a grant program that would allow communities to bring ideas to the table and attract matching funds.

Betty Naylor voiced agreement with Ben's perspective.

Soren clarified that the bulk of the current funding goes to law enforcement, which is a river-wide fund managed by the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands. He noted that this funding is now being deployed where needs are greatest, which could be a model for the entire Recreation Area Fund, not only the Zone.

Soren explained that the Blueprint Jordan River outlines a number of river oriented recreational activities beyond canoeing, kayaking, that include sculling, rowing—particularly in the heavily channelized stretch of the river between the Mill Creek confluence at approximately 2700 South and the Jordan River Surplus Canal Diversion at approximately 2000 South, and fishing and swimming, which are most prevalent in Utah County. He also mentioned nature-based activities like wildlife watching and bird spotting.

Ben added that he would like to see the funding's scope expanded beyond the 250-yard limit from the river to allow for projects that benefit the river directly, such as bank restoration, invasive species removal, boat ramps, and trail improvements, which help create a safer environment and manage recreation.

Don Shelton noted that there are many sections of the trail that need work.

Soren concluded the discussion on the funding program, acknowledging the need for fine-tuning and more funding from state, federal, and local matching sources. He briefly mentioned other legislative items being tracked, including a previous anti-litter resolution from Representative Cheryl Acton and the possibility of resurrecting a bill on riparian buffers previously proposed by Representative Gay Lynn Bennion in 2024. He also mentioned a discussion with Representative Casey Snider about additional protection for wildlife and waterfowl production areas, a bill that may reduce or eliminate low-impact development by Representative Tom Peterson, and a continued watch on legislation and funding related to homeless services, particularly as they relate to the new proposed homeless campus in Salt Lake City.

e) **[Written Report Only]** 2025 Utah Watersheds Council Annual Report

September 2025, prepared by the Utah Division of Water Resources –
<https://water.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Utah-Watersheds-Council-Annual-Report-2025.pdf>

f) **[Written Report Only]** 2025 Report to the Governor and Legislature on Utah's Land, Water & Air

October 2025, prepared by the USU Janet Quinney Lawson Institute for Land, Water & Air –
<https://www.usu.edu/ilwa/files/reports/2025/full-report.pdf>

4. Watershed Council Business

- a) **[Action Item]** Adopt August 7, 2025, Watershed Council Meeting Minutes

Dustin Gettel moved to adopt the August 7, 2025, Watershed Council Meeting minutes. Don Shelton seconded the motion.

There was no further discussion of the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved by Watershed Council Members.

- b) **[Action Item]** Adopt a Proposed 2026 Watershed Council Meeting Schedule

Silvia Catten moved to adopt the proposed 2026 Watershed Council Meeting schedule. Dustin Gettel seconded the motion.

There was no further discussion of the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved by Watershed Council Members.

- c) Additional Watershed Council Announcements & Information from Members and Advisors

There were no additional announcements or information.

- d) Upcoming Watershed Council Meeting & Event Schedule

The next Watershed Council meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 5, 2026, 10:00 AM.

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

Michael Horrocks moved to adjourn the meeting and reconvene as the Jordan River Commission Governing Board. Dustin Gettel seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:48 AM. The body reconvened as the Jordan River Commission Governing Board (see <https://www.utah.gov/pmn/sitemap/notice/1039085>).

A meeting recording, presentation, handout materials, and other information for the Jordan River Watershed Council are available at <https://www.utah.gov/pmn/sitemap/notice/997101.html>.

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