

Jordan River Commission Technical Advisory Committee

December 18, 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

Chris Cline, Past Chair
Ali Avery, Long Range Planner - North Salt Lake
Tori Bird, Conservation Action Coordinator - Utah's Hogle Zoo
Lynn Berni, Watershed Planning & Restoration Coordinator - Salt Lake County
Travis Christensen, Engineer - Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District
Jason Erekson, Assistant Parks and Recreation Director - West Valley City
Cory Fralick, Director of Public Services - West Jordan
Sage Fitch, Salt Lake County Weed Control - Salt Lake County
Keith Hambrecht, Invasive Species Coordinator - Utah Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands
Laura Haskell, Jordan River Basin Area Specialist - Utah Division of Water Resources
Bruce Holyoak, Park Superintendent - Murray
Brad Knoles, Regional Business Manager - Rocky Mountain Power
Eric McCulley, Riparian Restoration Expert - McCulley Watershed Consulting Services
Dan Potts, Aquatic Ecologist - Salt Lake Fish & Game Foundation
Matt Ryan, Community Planner - Wasatch Front Regional Council
Hugh Van Wagenen, Active Transportation Planner - Wasatch Front Regional Council
Sandy Wingert, Environmental Scientist - Utah Division of Water Quality

Commission Staff

Jens Ammon, Jordan River Restoration Coordinator
Ren Griffeth, Administration, Grant & Research Specialist
Caroline Johnston, Event & Volunteer Coordinator
Rachel Lyn, Communication & Outreach Manager
Soren Simonsen, Executive Director & Secretary

Visitors and Guests

Benn Buys, Executive Director - Utah Fairpark Area Investment & Restoration (UFAIR) District
Tyler Murdock, Deputy Director of Public Lands - Salt Lake City

Meeting Minutes

Chris Cline, Past Chair, chaired the meeting in the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair, and called the meeting to order at 2:02 PM.

1. Welcome & Introductions

a) Committee Roll Call & Other Introductions

2. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

3. Presentations & Discussion – Weed Management & Restoration

a. Jordan River Restoration Update & Best Practices Overview

Jens Ammon, the Jordan River Restoration Coordinator, provided an update on ongoing restoration efforts along the Jordan River Parkway and presented current best practices for phragmites treatment and removal. He announced that approximately \$100,000 would be released for the Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) grants for the coming year, with more information to follow at the next meeting and via email. Requests for Proposals for these grants, which fund invasive species control, vegetation improvement, and weed management along the Jordan River, are expected to be released in the next few months. Jens highlighted that the grants would again be open to multi-year projects, a structure that has proven helpful for achieving momentum and good work on the ground.

Jens discussed his ongoing Phragmites control and revegetation pilot projects, which are spread across the Jordan River. Many of these projects have completed their second year and are showing promising signs of control. Sites were chosen based on critical need, project protection, and leveraged efforts, with the ultimate goal of developing control methods that can be scaled up across the entire river. As a result of this work, best practice documents for Phragmites, Russian olive, and tamarisk control, as well as revegetation tips, have been created and can be accessed at the following link:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QPmEfsmh42QfG8sctSAZG7uJzZi033_g?usp=sharing.

Jens emphasized that the most effective strategy is to combine chemical, mechanical, and revegetation treatments, noting that each step is equally important in the long run. He provided an overall timeline, as follows: herbicide spraying in the late summer (typically August), mowing during the winter, and revegetation interspersed during the spring and fall. He specified that late-season spraying yields better long-term results, but the most crucial factor is spraying when the Phragmites are healthy enough to absorb the herbicide. Signs of yellowing leaf tips indicate the plant is too unhealthy for effective treatment.

For chemical treatment, Jens explained that they use an aquatic-approved glyphosate at the higher end of the labeled rate, combined with an aquatic-approved non-ionic surfactant. He mentioned that adding ammonium sulfate can also improve absorption. Although aquatic-approved imazapyr is an option, Jens generally only recommends it after glyphosate has been used for a few years and there is a risk of resistance, as imazapyr tends to persist in the soil and can impact revegetation efforts. He noted that all different application methods have been used, including backpack, vehicle, and drone spraying, with drone spraying being especially useful for inaccessible, water-blocked patches. Jens also requested recommendations for a good drone-spraying contractor.

The mechanical treatment, primarily mowing, is scheduled for the winter to allow the herbicide sufficient time to be absorbed and because lower winter water levels make patches more accessible for vehicles and foot traffic. Jens clarified that mowing is important to remove old biomass, which allows subsequent herbicide treatments to reach new growth and makes the new growth more visible.

Addressing revegetation, Jens stated that he prefers a combination of living plants and seed. Living plants provide quick growth in the landscape, while seeds help compete with the invasive plant seed bank. He stressed that establishing quick native plant cover is important to restore ecological function and resist the reinvasion of Phragmites or other invasive weeds. However, he prefers to complete at least a couple of years of herbicide and mowing before revegetating, as applying herbicide becomes much trickier once desirable plants are mixed in. He named Inland Saltgrass as a favorite plant recommendation from the best practices document, praising it for being a good, short ground cover that tolerates the Jordan River's frequent water level fluctuations.

Jens summarized his key takeaways, emphasizing that consistency with timing and application is very important, as Phragmites control is typically a three-to-five-year endeavor. He pointed out the significant negative impact of skipping the second year of herbicide treatment, saying it can make the previous year's

efforts appear fruitless. He also advised being thorough, as small, missed patches can quickly add up across the river. He reiterated the importance of waiting a month between mowing and herbicide treatments to ensure the plant can either absorb the chemical or regrow enough to make the herbicide effective. Finally, he stressed the need to keep bank stability in mind for new riverbank project sites. He suggested methods like removing Phragmites in phases, using temporary erosion controls such as fabric or logs, or quickly installing new vegetation like willow stakes or sod mats to provide immediate stability. Jens closed by expressing his hope that the multi-year CWMA grants would better support the required longer-term weed management efforts.

b. Ongoing Management of Parks & Public Lands

Soren Simonsen introduced two presenters, and shared an overview of ongoing maintenance of the Jordan River natural lands and other public lands that often presents a significant funding challenge. Murray and Salt Lake City have effectively built ongoing political support for different projects and maintenance programs. Soren noted that Bruce Holyoak was filling in for Kim Sorensen due to a scheduling conflict. Bruce Holyoak from Murray and Tyler Murdock from Salt Lake City shared their experiences.

Bruce Holyoak began discussing ways to secure funding, explaining that their organization has learned the importance of getting buy-in from citizens, as this significantly helps to get buy-in from elected officials. This engagement is achieved by soliciting feedback and listening to citizens' concerns and suggestions. Bruce noted that they have a process for handling calls regarding issues seen on the Jordan River or in the parks, where they track concerns and try to resolve any issues as quickly as possible. They also make efforts to explain when a resolution will take some time to help manage expectations.

Continuous efforts have been put towards getting the community involved in service projects along the river over the years, mentioning that they now use resources like JustServe.org and work with other groups and businesses in the city and county. He emphasized that this volunteering helps the community buy in to the parks and develop a sense of stewardship. This is a major factor when approaching elected officials for money, as the citizens are involved and providing support. Bruce stressed the importance of communication with elected officials and keeping them informed about activities. They also send monthly reports, including texts and pictures, detailing activities, trail counts, and volunteer hours to demonstrate the importance of the parks and the Jordan River Parkway. He concluded that this communication and demonstration of value make it easier to get elected officials to approve funding.

Bruce stated that proper maintenance of trails and amenities like restrooms, benches, and lighting makes it easier to justify funding. He suggested explaining to officials that the well-maintained appearance is a direct result of the money allocated in the budget. This includes a good trash removal program, keeping restrooms clean, and maintaining older buildings.

Bruce also highlighted the importance of retaining employees to maintain institutional knowledge and reduce training time. He added that retaining employees means they get paid more, including overtime, and these factors contribute to keeping the parks well-maintained. This responsible use of funds ensures that the City Council and elected officials are happy to approve funding, knowing the money is used wisely. He mentioned their success in this area, crediting good leadership and a supportive City Council.

Murray has a 24-hour graffiti removal policy, which involves quick removal via painting or power washing, noting that they have secured funding from the Police Department and other departments for this effort. He also emphasized the need to quickly repair vandalism damage to prevent the areas from looking rundown. Finally, he spoke about the weed management program, which began 25 years ago with the removal of tamarisk and Phragmites. He noted that maintaining the progress is now relatively inexpensive but crucial, citing an example where a few missed areas by new employees could quickly undo past work. Bruce concluded his presentation by summarizing that these efforts lead to buy-in from the community and elected officials, which secures the necessary funding to maintain and improve the system.

Tyler Murdock was the next presenter. Tyler began to discuss capital investment work in Salt Lake City, specifically mentioning the Emerald Ribbon Master plan, which aims to provide a cohesive vision for the 10-mile, 800-acre Jordan River Corridor that runs through Salt Lake City. He explained that a clear vision is essential to incentivize elected officials to invest in long-term care and maintenance. Tyler noted that the

Emerald Ribbon plan complements other efforts like the Blueprint Jordan River. In addition to the master plan, an operations and management plan was completed last year, providing much-needed standard operating procedures and a vision for staffing teams.

Tyler detailed the five guiding principles of the Emerald Ribbon Master Plan: improving ecological diversity, creating better connections to the river for west side neighborhoods, cultivating stewardship with partners, restoring the ecosystem, and creating a safe and vibrant destination. He confirmed that good progress has been made on safety issues this year. Regarding capital investments, Tyler stated that over the next three years, approximately \$52 million in bond funding will be spent on parks and open space. A majority of this is going to Glendale Regional Park, with Phase 1 recently opened, featuring a substantial wetland for stormwater management. He also mentioned the new Backman Community Nature Playground, increasing access to nature for neighborhood children. Cottonwood Park and Modesto Park are slated for full design and restoration, with construction anticipated in 2027, as well as a \$30 million Phase 2 for Glendale Regional Park focused on the river corridor and oxbow.

Addressing maintenance and stewardship, Tyler spoke about the effort to increase the naturalization of the river to improve both habitat and aesthetics. To make this concept tangible for the public, they highlight projects like the Cornell Wetlands, a stormwater improvement project near the Day-Riverside Library. He described several key partnerships that support their work: the Department of Corrections' greenhouse program (which grows 30,000 plants annually), an agreement with the University of Utah for plant propagation and volunteer students, and expanded contractual services with Utah Conservation Corps crews. He also detailed a three-year effort for debris and vegetation clearing to improve recreational access and flow, noting that the state has contributed almost a million dollars over four years to this project. Tyler stressed the importance of improving sightlines and utilizing Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, which have successfully brought attention and funding. He noted that they hosted three walk-alongs with the Mayor and City Council this year, and state legislators are now planning to run legislation to improve capital and maintenance funding for the river.

Tyler discussed the move toward operational efficiency, specifically for trash removal. Due to the increased need for trash removal, the city invested in large in-ground trash receptacles that are being piloted along the river. This innovation has dramatically improved efficiency, reducing the emptying schedule to once every two to three months and allowing staff to focus on maintenance in other areas. He provided statistics for their recent volunteer stewardship efforts, which included 32 individual sessions, 2,000 volunteer hours, 5,000 pounds of trash removed, and 40,000 plants planted in a nine-mile section of the Jordan River. Finally, Tyler outlined the goal to increase the natural component of the Jordan River in Salt Lake City to at least 30% over the next five years. He acknowledged the operational challenge, noting the current staffing level of one full-time equivalent (FTE) per 75 acres is insufficient, and they are aiming for 20 acres per FTE, exploring alternative funding mechanisms like the county quarter-cent sales tax.

c. Committee Discussion

Chris Cline opened the floor for questions and discussion. Chris first asked Jens Ammon if the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands maintains a list of contractors, products, and standard operating procedures for cities to access. Jens confirmed that their Management Practice Fact Sheets cover methods and products. He shared the names of two contractors, Terra Landworks and Dewey Brothers, and invited follow-up questions, noting their pilot projects aim to get contractors familiar with working on the river.

Tyler Murdock asked Jens if those contractors could be made accessible via a state contract. Jens agreed to look into the possibility of setting up an easier mechanism for cities to use them.

Soren Simonsen then asked Tyler to share the final Emerald Ribbon Master Plan and the Operations and Management Plan, as he only found a draft of the plan was publicly available. Tyler agreed to share both as public documents, welcoming feedback from other cities.

Soren shared his observations and praised the development of municipal-level plans, citing Murray, Lehi, Riverton, and West Jordan, which build upon the Blueprint Jordan River framework. He expressed concern, shared by others, about the lack of sustainable, ongoing maintenance and stewardship funding for the river. He

highlighted the Cooperative Weed Management Area program, which receives a \$250,000 annual appropriation from the Utah Legislature.

Soren reiterated common threads of success from the speakers, which include actively listening to the community, establishing strong volunteer programs, and getting elected officials out on the river. He offered the Commission's fleet of canoes and kayaks as a resource to help facilitate this.

Soren noted a significant turnover in municipal elected officials in the region following the November election, and announced the Commission's plan to meet with all sixteen cities in the next quarter to introduce or reintroduce the Commission.

Rachel Lyn followed up on the idea of bringing elected officials out on the river. She also requested that Murray, Salt Lake City, and any other interested cities send her their volunteer numbers for inclusion in the Commission's annual report.

Lastly, Soren mentioned plant propagation resources, including the state prison's greenhouse program, and highlighted the new propagation facility being completed at the Tracy Aviary Nature Center in South Salt Lake, a partnership with Tree Utah.

Chris closed the discussion by noting the future goal of coordinating multi-city projects to split mobilization costs for contractors, thereby reducing costs and improving effectiveness.

4. Committee Business

a. **[Action Item] Adopt the October 16, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

Dan Potts moved to adopt the October 16, 2025, meeting minutes. Laura Haskell seconded the motion.

There was no further discussion of the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved by the Committee members present.

b. **[Action Item] Adopt a Proposed 2026 Meeting Schedule**

Soren Simonsen presented the proposed Committee meeting schedule for 2026, and noted a scheduling change that involves the Governing Board. In the past, the Board and Committee organized separate field trips in May and September. It has been decided to combine these. He explained that combining the field trips aims to create opportunities for greater engagement and interaction, fostering cross-pollination between the Technical Advisory Committee, the Governing Board, and the Watershed Council. Soren referenced the previous combined field trip to the Bingham/Kennecott Copper Mine in September as a positive example of this interaction. The Governing Board explicitly requested to continue these combined field trips to maximize engagement among the three groups.

Ali Avery moved to adopt the proposed 2026 meeting schedule. Brad Knoles seconded the motion.

There was no further discussion of the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved by the Committee members present.

c. **Jordan River Watershed Council - Advisory Role for the Technical Advisory Committee**

Soren Simonsen provided an informational update on the Jordan River Commission Watershed Council, the appointment of which was finalized in January 2024. He mentioned that the current chair, Laura Briefer, is interested in having the Technical Advisory Committee formally serve as an advisory body to the Watershed Council to better define the relationship between the two groups. The Watershed Council's next meeting in

March will include a strategic planning session to discuss this. The February Committee meeting will also include this matter as a discussion topic to determine what kind of support the Committee could offer, especially concerning water-related issues like conservation and water rights.

d. Announce Committee Leadership Call for Nominations

Soren Simonsen announced that the appointment of Committee leadership (Chair, Vice Chair, and Past Chair, all serving two-year terms) will be held at the January meeting. Typically, the Vice Chair is automatically nominated for Chair, and Gina Grandpre has expressed interest in this role. This means the Vice Chair position is open for nomination. Both Soren and Chris Cline encouraged members to consider the Vice Chair role, describing it as a great, minimal-commitment leadership opportunity that involves a short monthly leadership meeting to plan the agenda and broaden understanding of river-related issues. Members interested in the role were asked to reach out to Soren, Chris, or the current chair, Marian Rice, for more information.

e. Upcoming Committee Meetings

Thursday, January 15, 2026, 2:00 PM - Regular Committee Meeting, Community Development Focus

f. Committee Member Announcements & Updates

Dan Potts shared that a nature project his group is working on along the Jordan River is hopeful for enough moisture to ensure survival through the winter, and he congratulated Tree Utah for their work. He also reported that the Westside Coalition successfully solicited funds, including a large donation from the Miller family, to help 23 families in the Lower Jordan/North Salt Lake area whose homes were flooded due to a beaver-plugged ditch combined with Phragmites overgrowth.

Brad Knoles announced that Rocky Mountain Power has finally broken ground on their new headquarters, in a joint effort with the Miller Group, which he believes will rejuvenate the North Temple area and draw more attention to the river.

Soren Simonsen added that the Larry H. Miller Company is undertaking a massive, voluntary, unfunded cleanup of groundwater contamination (diesel fuel) at a site near North Temple, which may be a good topic to share at a future meeting. He also mentioned that the new Saratoga Springs City Hall at Inlet Park, with its spectacular views of the Jordan River and Utah Lake from the top-floor City Council Chambers, will be available for public use, and could be a Get to the River Festival event location.

5. Commission Staff Reports (as time permits)

a. Website Update

Rachel Lyn gave a brief staff report on the website's progress. The steering committee will review the site in the first week of January, followed by a walkthrough and presentation at the next Committee meeting. They aim to launch the website near the end of January before the legislative session begins.

Soren Simonsen emphasized that the update makes the Blueprint Jordan River a major, interwoven component of the entire site. He also announced that a separate project is underway to update the mobile website, MyJordanRiver.org, into a mobile app, which is scheduled to roll out in March of 2026.

b. Commission Updates

Soren Simonsen highlighted the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which has \$5 million available for Utah projects related to parks, trails, and open space, with applications due on January 15, 2026. Ali Avery provided a cautionary note about the Land and Water Conservation Fund, explaining that it is a perpetual grant that requires the funded property to remain dedicated to outdoor recreation forever, and any substantive change in use requires a complex and costly buy-out process, plus NEPA approval. She advised that it is best used for conservation purposes.

Soren acknowledged this feedback and mentioned that the five Utah Outdoor Recreation Grant programs will also be released in early 2026, with due dates around mid-March.

Finally, Soren announced a volunteer appreciation event on Friday, January 23, 2026, hosted by North Salt Lake, which will include a screening of the film Upriver (Up-River.org) .

6. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:34 PM.

A meeting recording, presentation, handout materials, and meeting minutes are available at <https://www.utah.gov/pmn/sitemap/notice/1039101.html>.

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

Meeting Minutes Adopted February 19, 2026.