

Jordan River Commission Governing Board Meeting

February 5, 2026 | 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 remotely via Zoom.

Meeting Attendees

Governing Board Members

Councilmember Don Shelton, Chair, South Jordan
Councilmember Mackey Smith, Bluffdale
Todd Draper, Draper (Alternate)
Mayor Dustin Gettel, Midvale
Wendelin Knobloch, Midvale (Alternate)
Councilmember Silvia Catten, Past Chair, Millcreek
Bruce Holyoak, Murray (Alternate)
Councilmember Ted Knowlton, North Salt Lake
Councilmember Alexander Johnson, Riverton
Mayor Tish Buroker, Riverton (Alternate)
Rachel Otto, Salt Lake City (Alternate)
Councilmember Aaron Dekeyzer, Sandy
Gina Grandpre, Saratoga Springs (Alternate)
Colby Hill, South Jordan
Councilmember Clarissa Williams, South Salt Lake
Sharen Hauri, South Salt Lake (Alternate)
Cory Fralick, West Jordan (Alternate)
Councilmember William Whetstone, West Valley City
Lisa Hartman, Salt Lake County (Alternate)
Candice Hasenyager, Utah DEQ, Division of Water Quality
Sandy Wingert, Utah Division of Water Quality (Alternate)
Emma Whitaker, Utah DNR, Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands (Alternate)
Nathan Lee, Utah Department of Transportation
Gordon Batt, Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District (Alternate)
Benn Buys, Utah Fairpark Area Investment and Restoration (UFAIR) District
Betty Naylor, Gardner Heritage Farms
Craig Thaxton, Jordan River Foundation
Heidi Hoven, National Audubon Society
Councilmember Brad Parry, Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation
Brad Knoles, Rocky Mountain Power
Tim Brown, Tracy Aviary
Michael Horrocks, Wasatch Rowing Foundation

Commission Staff

Caroline Johnston, Event & Volunteer Coordinator
Jens Ammon, Jordan River Restoration Coordinator
Rachel Lyn, Communications & Outreach Manager

Ren Griffeth, Administrative, Grant & Research Specialist
Soren Simonsen, Executive Director & Commission Secretary

Visitors and Guests

Andrea Nelson, Office of Congressman Burgess Owens
Brandon Biederman, PORT
Brian Trusty, PROS Consulting
Carly Payne, Division of Water Resources
Eric McCulley, McCulley Watershed Consulting Services
HD Sanderson, Office of Congressman Mike Kennedy
Heather May, Great Salt Lake Collaborative
John B. Lindsay
Jon Glenn, Chair, Event Advisory Committee
Jon Howe, Bowen Collins
Lily Bosworth, Jacobs Construction
Marisa Weinberg, Great Salt Lake Sentinel Landscape

Meeting Minutes

Don Shelton, Chair, called the Governing Board meeting to order at 10:04 AM.

1. Governing Board Welcome, Roll Call & Introductions

a. Welcome of Jordan River Commission Governing Board Members, and other meeting participants

The Chair welcomed Governing Board members and visitors.

b. Introduction of New Governing Board Members & Representatives (00:00:40 on audio recording)

Soren Simonsen welcomed Benn Buys, Executive Director of the Utah Fair Park Area Investment and Restoration (UFAIR) District. His organization recently joined the Commission as an interlocal member organization.

Benn Buys expressed his enthusiasm for making the Jordan River a centerpiece of the Fair Park area and the future Major League Baseball stadium development.

Councilmember Mackey Smith from Bluffdale introduced himself, and shared his long-standing interest in environmental issues and his appreciation for the outdoor experiences the Jordan River Trail offers his community.

Bruce Holyoak introduced himself as a new Alternate from Murray City. He has nearly 30 years of experience on the Jordan River Parkway, and spoke of his love for nature and recommended a visit to the Kennecott Nature Center.

Councilmember Alexander Johnson from Riverton introduced himself and shared his excitement to contribute to the Commission. He noted his enjoyment running on the trail. And as a former staff member of Congressman Burgess Owens, he worked previously on grants for the Commission.

Councilmember Aaron Dekeyzer from Sandy introduced himself. While working on a master's degree in ecopsychology, he was introduced to and involved with dedicating a wetland at Grandpa's Pond. He has a desire to contribute to the environment.

Candice Hasenyager introduced herself as the new Director of the Utah Division of Water Quality. She is very familiar with the Commission, noting her involvement as former director of the Division of Water Resources experience. She enjoys biking the Jordan River Parkway.

Gordon Batt was introduced as the new Alternate for the Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District.

2. Public Comment (*00:12:40 on audio recording*)

Mayor Tish Buroker provided a comment on behalf of a constituent. The concern is regarding high school students jumping off a bridge along the trail in Lehi, which is causing difficulty for other trail users.

Soren Simonsen confirmed Commission staff have received multiple reports and acknowledged the area's increasing popularity due to nearby growth, noting that access for law enforcement is challenging. They also mentioned ongoing discussions with Lehi Parks and Rec to explore alternatives, such as dedicated swimming piers or alternate bridges, and noted that a bill from Senator Fillmore focused on river access could provide funding opportunities to help resolve these conflicts.

3. Presentations & Discussion

a. Central Jordan River Reconnect Master Plan Implementation Coordination & Discussion (*00:16:11 on audio recording*)

Brandon Biederman, Associate Principal and Project Manager with the consulting team from PORT, and Brian Trusty, Principal of Park Operations & Maintenance with PROS Consulting, led a discussion about approaches to coordinated park development, management, and maintenance related to the “Central Jordan River Reconnect” Regional Park Master Plan for Salt Lake County (<https://www.centraljordanreconnect.com>). This discussion also covered potential broader applications to other areas and regional parks and natural lands across the Jordan River Parkway, and the possible roles of the Jordan River Commission or other entities.

Brian presented early recommendations for management and governance strategies. The project is nearing completion, with a draft plan expected to be submitted to the county in early March and adoption potentially considered by planning commissions and city councils in the spring or summer.

Brian proposed that the Jordan River Commission (JRC) serve as the convener for collaborative management, citing its neutral third-party status and broad focus. The strategy involves forming a subcommittee of the Commission, which would include the five municipalities, Salt Lake County, and other public and non-profit partners such as Flood Control and DNR. This subcommittee would be responsible for establishing management priorities, coordinating efforts, developing an annual program calendar, and setting and enforcing shared operation and maintenance standards to ensure a seamless public experience across the different jurisdictions' lands. It was noted that municipal partners would not relinquish authority over their own lands.

Brian mentioned that the current maintenance is primarily handled by the City of Murray and Salt Lake County. The planning scope includes identifying dedicated, long-term funding sources. Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) districts were noted as unsuitable for funding ongoing operations and maintenance, as their proceeds are limited to capital expenses. However, special improvement or business improvement districts were highlighted as offering greater flexibility for maintenance funding, though the political feasibility of pursuing such options remains a question.

During the discussion, Mayor Dustin Gettel expressed strong support for the Commission's role in coordinating regional partnerships, emphasizing the need for consistent rules and amenities along the trail.

Mayor Tish Buroker raised a question about the model's scalability to other sections of the Jordan River.

Brandon Biederman confirmed extensive engagement with various stakeholders, including meetings with Salt Lake County Flood Control, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and various city planning and parks departments, with a follow-up with County Flood Control planned for next week.

Betty Naylor raised the long-term challenge of managing the homeless population within the planning area.

Brandon and Soren confirmed this has been a major topic in community engagement and is being addressed in the plan through recommendations for landscape maintenance to reduce encampment opportunities and coordination with local law enforcement.

Heidi Hoven urged the use of the Commission's existing guiding principles for trail lighting to ensure the new developments balance public safety with the preservation of nature.

Don Shelton concluded by providing examples of joint ventures for regional parks like Sugar House Park and Bingham Creek Regional Park as models, but noted the significant political buy-in required for such park authority structures.

Soren also clarified that the Commission's interlocal agreement includes bonding authority but not taxing authority for long-term maintenance funding.

b. Great Salt Lake Sentinel Landscape (00:53:35 on audio recording)

Marisa Weinberg, Program Manager and Coordinator for the Great Salt Lake Sentinel Landscape, shared information about this recently designated entity and partnership, which includes over 2.7 million acres in northern Utah related to four primary military installations—Hill Air Force Base, Camp Williams, Tooele Army Depot, and Little Mountain Test Facility—with a focus on environmental conservation and community resilience in the communities around these facilities. She noted that the Jordan River Commission had been invited as a partner and to serve on the steering committee for this new initiative, which was created two years ago through a bill sponsored by Representative Trevor Lee to bring the federal Sentinel Landscape program to Utah. Additional information is at <https://sentinellandscapes.org/landscapes/great-salt-lake>.

Marisa explained that the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership originated in the early 2000s when military installations sought to counter the effects of encroachment and natural resource issues by establishing conservation on lands outside their boundaries. This effort evolved into a partnership among the Department of War, the Department of the Interior, and the Department of Agriculture, formalized in a 2013 Memorandum of Understanding to conserve entire geographical landscapes surrounding military installations. The partnership designates landscapes on a two-year cycle as diverse areas centered around military installations with natural resource issues, and though the backbone is federal, the Great Salt Lake Sentinel Landscape is locally led and driven, with no federal oversight.

The Great Salt Lake Sentinel Landscape was officially designated in 2024, covering nine counties in Utah, despite some acreage limitations that excluded parts of the northern Great Salt Lake arm and a chunk of the Jordan River. The partnership of over 40 current members is entirely voluntary and focuses on four main pillars: military readiness and resilience, mitigating catastrophic wildfire, protecting water resources, and preserving critical habitat for all terrestrial and aquatic wildlife within its boundaries.

Regarding funding, Marisa clarified that the Sentinel Landscape program itself does not provide funds directly, but offers priority access to certain funding streams through the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program within the Department of War. It also facilitates matching funds through partner collaboration and exposes local projects to a broad network of national funding opportunities via the National

Sentinel Landscape Partnership. Examples of funded projects in Utah include a water resilience study for Hill Air Force Base to understand and build groundwater and surface water resilience, a new landowner conservation resource to provide a centralized one-stop shop for land-use information, and the Upper Weber Watershed Project for fuels mitigation to secure water quality and quantity for Hill Air Force Base and Great Salt Lake.

Marisa emphasized that the partnership is a creative, collaborative platform designed to complement ongoing work by connecting partners and bringing in new resources, allowing agencies to expand their efforts beyond their typical jurisdiction. Ren Griffith noted that the Jordan River Commission is already exploring potential REPI funding opportunities with the Utah Lake Authority for invasive species removal around Utah Lake and the Jordan River. Commission staff are also exploring a partnership with Camp Williams to develop river access that could serve both public recreation and military water training needs. Marisa reaffirmed that project work outside the purple boundary line, such as along the Jordan River, can still be considered a Sentinel Landscape project if it helps protect and preserve water resources connected to Great Salt Lake.

c. Jordan River Storytelling Project with Great Salt Lake Collaborative (01:09:05 on audio recording)

Heather May, Director of the Great Salt Lake Collaborative, provided a report and update on a project funded in part by a Jordan River Commission Small Grant (see <https://greatsaltlakenews.org>). She reported on activities related to the Collaborative's grant of \$5,000 to cover stories related to the Jordan River. The Collaborative, which began in 2022 as a group of twelve Utah news organizations, covers Great Salt Lake and the Colorado River, with a goal to raise awareness about the Lake and water issues in the Wasatch Front. They operate as a non-advocacy organization and focus on Solutions Journalism, reporting not only on crises but also on evidence-based solutions.

The primary focus of the grant is a project to explore Utahns' relationship with the Jordan River, and to explain how water quality affects recreation. The Collaborative noted that while the public is generally aware of Great Salt Lake's challenges, they are less informed about the quality of water reaching it via the Jordan River. Project deliverables include soliciting stories from the public through an ongoing survey, conducting a reporting trip to the river with news partners like The Salt Lake Tribune and KSL TV, and creating a collated webpage on GreatSaltLakeNews.org. Multimedia stories on water quality and recreation are expected to be published by April.

Initial survey comments highlight issues such as water contamination, infections in dogs, unpleasant smells, and general concerns with safety. One survey response expressed the hope to “not only have it get to the River Festival, but it get into the River Festival” comfortably. Heather concluded by asking for help in promoting the survey through Commission and its partners’ channels, and by providing resources, including a free weekly newsletter and all their ad-free work on GreatSaltLakeNews.org.

4. Commission Business

Chair Shelton requested a motion to move agenda items 4d and 4e to immediately follow agenda item 4a to accommodate participant schedules. (01:23:20 on audio recording)

Tish Buroker moved to reorder the meeting agenda as proposed. Silvia Catten seconded the motion.

There was no further discussion of the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved by Governing Board members present.

a. December 4, 2025, Governing Board Meeting Minutes (01:24:15 on audio recording)

Heidi Hoven moved to adopt the December 4, 2025, Governing Board meeting minutes. Lisa Hartman seconded the motion.

There was no further discussion of the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved by Governing Board members present.

d. Fiscal Year 2026 Second Quarter Financial Report (01:25:28 on audio recording)

Soren Simonsen briefly reviewed the Fiscal Year 2026 Second Quarter Financial Report. He noted that the approval of the funding associated with various grant programs will likely be changed with the approval of Senate Bill 130. He indicated that the report can be found in the meeting packet provided to members of the Board for their review.

e. Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Proposal (01:30:18 on audio recording)

Soren Simonsen gave a brief overview of the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Proposal. He noted that the Commission is not making any substantial changes to the budget compared to the current fiscal year. He reviewed six different areas that the Commission is requesting funding for this year through the legislative appropriation, including funding for staff support, public safety improvements, vehicle a new vehicle and trailer purchases, and the Puncturevine Bounty program. A three percent increase in staff salaries is recommended this year to account for inflation, with an additional half percent for performance.

b. Committee Appointments (01:46:10 on audio recording)

i. Executive Committee

Mackey Smith moved to appoint the Executive Committee members as presented with current members, and adding Candice Hasenyager and Tyler Beltran to fill vacancies. Tish Buroker seconded the motion.

There was no further discussion of the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved by Governing Board members present.

ii. Technical Advisory Committee

Betty Naylor moved to appoint the Technical Advisory Committee members as presented. Michael Horrocks seconded the motion.

There was no further discussion of the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved by Governing Board members present.

iii. Event Advisory Committee

No actions were taken on this item.

Silvia Catten was designated to chair the remainder of the meeting, as Chair Shelton had to leave early.

c. State and Federal Legislative Updates (01:54:23 on audio recording)

Soren Simonsen noted that the Jordan River Commission is currently tracking about 75 to 80 bills in the General Session of the Utah Legislature. He discussed two bills, including SB130 River Restoration Amendments, sponsored by Senator Fillmore, and HCRO06 Concurrent Resolution Regarding the Utah Housing Strategic Plan from Representative Whyte.

Soren shared that he received a notice from the League of American Bicyclists indicating that the chair of the House Committee reviewing the federal transportation reauthorization bill has recommended eliminating funding for active transportation and related programs. He invited Governing Board members who share concerns about this to follow up. Mayor Dirk Burton of West Jordan was one of several Utah co-signers of a letter shared by the League.

f. Upcoming Meeting Schedule (02:03:27 on audio recording)

Soren Simonsen reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule. The next Jordan River Watershed Council Meeting will be held on Thursday, March 5, 2026, at 10:00 AM. The next Governing Board Meeting and Budget Hearing will be held on Thursday, April 2, 2026, at 10:00 AM.

g. Annual Utah Open and Public Meetings Act Training

This item was postponed due to time constraints.

5. Staff Reports

a. Rachel Turk, Communications & Outreach Manager (02:05:40 on audio recording)

Rachel Lyn provided an overview of the 2025 Jordan River Commission Annual Report and requested that Governing Board members review and offer feedback.

Rachel also shared an update regarding the new website and indicated that she would provide a link for the Board to review the site and provide feedback when it is ready for review in the near future.

b. Caroline Johnston, Event & Volunteer Coordinator

This item was postponed due to time constraints.

c. Jens Ammon, Jordan River Restoration Coordinator

This item was postponed due to time constraints.

6. Director's Report

This item was postponed due to time constraints.

7. Adjourn

Mackey Smith moved to adjourn the meeting. Aaron Dekeyzer seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:19 PM.

A meeting recording, presentation and handout materials, and meeting minutes are available at <https://www.utah.gov/pmn/sitemap/notice/1049161.html>.

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

Meeting minutes adopted August 6, 2026.