

Jordan River Commission Jordan River Watershed Council Meeting

July 9, 2026 | 10:00 a.m.

Meeting Location

This meeting was conducted entirely virtually, with an anchor location at the Jordan River Commission office.

Meeting Attendees

Watershed Council Members

Laura Briefer, Chair, Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities
Heidi Hoven, Vice Chair, National Audubon Society
Councilmember Mackey Smith, Bluffdale
Councilmember Bryn Johnson, Draper
Craig Thaxton, Jordan River Foundation
Councilmember Emily Lockhart, Lehi
Todd Munger, Lehi City (Alternate)
Councilmember Silvia Catten, Past Chair, Millcreek
Councilmember Ted Knowlton, North Salt Lake
Ali Avery, North Salt Lake (Alternate)
Councilmember Brad Parry, Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation
Lisa Hartman, Salt Lake County Mayor (Alternate)
David Jellen, Saratoga Springs (Alternate)
Councilmember Don Shelton, South Jordan
Councilmember Alexander Johnson, Riverton
Councilmember Aaron Dekeyser, Sandy
Sharen Hauri, South Salt Lake (Alternate)
Mayor Kristie Overson, Taylorsville
Tim Brown, Tracy Aviary
Commissioner Skyler Beltran, Utah County
Derek Shumway, Utah County (Alternate)
Benn Buys, Utah Fairpark Area Investment & Restoration (UFAIR) District
Luke Peterson, Utah Lake Authority
Liz Larsen, Utah's Hogle Zoo
Cory Fralick, West Jordan (Alternate)
Michael Horrocks, Wasatch Rowing Foundation

Watershed Council Advisors

Laura Haskell, Utah Division of Water Resources
Carly Payne, Utah DNR, Division of Water Resources
Keith Lawrence, Utah DNR, Division of Wildlife Resources
Senator Lincoln Fillmore, Utah Legislature
Sangy Wingert, Utah DEQ, Division of Water Quality
Emma Whitaker, Utah DNR, Division of Fire, Forestry & State Lands
Emily Andrea, Utah DNR, Division of Fire, Forestry & State Lands

Commission Staff

Soren Simonsen, Executive Director & Secretary
Rachel Lyn, Communications & Outreach Manager
Caroline Johnston, Volunteer & Event Coordinator

Jens Ammon, Restoration Coordinator
Amelia Miller, Administrative, Finance & Grant Specialist
Autumn Mead, Volunteer Program Intern
Audrey Zietz, Communications Intern

Visitors and Guests

Aspen Johnston, GSL Commissioner
Joel Williams, Utah Division of Water Resources
Nathan Lunstad, Utah Division of Drinking Water
Robert Edgel, Watershed Restoration Initiative/Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Ryan Hamilton, Utah Division of Water Rights
Wayne Western, Utah Division of Oil, Gas & Mining
Hailey Kirlin, Utah Division of Water Resources
Paul Burnett, Utah Division of Water Quality
Rachel Ellingson, Office of Congresswoman Celeste Maloy
Bryce Bird, Utah Division of Utah Quality

Meeting Minutes

Laura Briefer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM.

1. Welcome & Introductions

Laura Briefer welcomed Watershed Council members and other meeting participants.

2. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

3. Presentations & Discussion

a) State of the Jordan River & Watershed (00:02:16 on audio recording)

Representatives from several state water and watershed related agencies shared information including the mission and purpose of their respective agencies, recent legislative and policy updates, and the current state of the Jordan River and Watershed, including Utah Lake and Great Salt Lake, with highlights of current concerns, initiatives, projects and programs.

(00:02:55 on audio recording)

Luke Peterson, Executive Director of the Utah Lake Authority, provided an update on Phragmites control and mitigation strategies around Utah Lake, along with ongoing restoration projects. He highlighted the main concerns currently affecting local residents and outlined efforts by the Utah Lake Authority to reshape public perception and address misconceptions through promotional advertisements and social media campaigns. Additionally, plans are underway to develop a Utah Lake Nature Center.

(00:13:50 on audio recording)

Wayne Western, Environmental Manager for the Minerals Program at the Utah Division of Oil, Gas & Mining, provided an update on current initiatives along the Jordan River. His presentation covered major mining operations within Jordan River Watershed, including the Kennecott Mine. Additionally, he outlined the diverse natural resources under his jurisdiction.

(00:21:17 on audio recording)

Aspen Johnston, Strategic Coordinator for the Great Salt Lake Commissioner, provided an update on a \$2 million Salt Lake County grant secured to revitalize the Goggin Drain structure. Modernization efforts include establishing a power connection and installing monitoring cameras to improve response capabilities water

delivery. Aspen Johnston noted that while the water delivery program typically provides partial funding, this project received full funding due to its critical importance. He also highlighted collaborations with public and private organizations and discussed the requirements and oversight for a new water leasing program.

(00:38:35 on audio recording)

Robert Edgel, Habitat Assistant Manager for Watershed Restoration Initiative's (WRI) Central Region, provided an overview of the initiative. Established in 2006, WRI is a state-led partnership under the Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) that coordinates federal, state, local, and private stakeholders across five regions to improve watershed health. To date, the program has restored 2,000 miles of streams, averaging 120,000 acres of habitat restoration annually, with 120 projects completed in 2025 alone. Robert Edge also provided an update on funding and projects slated for fiscal year 2027.

(00:57:50 on audio recording)

Joel Williams, Director of the Utah Division of Water Resources, outlined the Division's current priorities. A primary initiative is the development of the 2026 State Water Plan, scheduled for publication by the end of December 2026, with opportunities for public review forthcoming. He also discussed the Great Salt Lake Basin Integrated Plan and the collaborative work of the state's 13 watershed councils in addressing local issues. Regarding conservation, the Division is focused on its landscape incentive program, urging cities to adopt water efficiency standards, and providing technical support and grants for community water quality improvements. Additionally, he noted a \$265 million initiative for secondary water metering installations.

(01:06:03 on audio recording)

Ryan Hamilton, Regional Engineer for the Utah Division of Water Rights, provided an overview of the Division's role in administering water measurement, appropriation, and distribution. He highlighted collaborations with Utah State University to map water distribution and install new monitoring devices along the Jordan River. Additionally, he discussed the Great Salt Lake Distribution Management Plan and the Division's regulatory responsibilities regarding data center construction under HB 76.

(01:15:12 on audio recording)

Emma Whitaker, Lands Operations Manager for the Division of Fire, Forestry & State Lands (FFSL), presented on behalf of Deputy Director Ben Stireman. She provided an overview of FFSL's Comprehensive Management Plans (CMPs), focusing specifically on the Great Salt Lake CMP, and demonstrated an interactive online tool designed for visualizing these plans. Additionally, she shared a Great Salt Lake elevation matrix, requested member feedback via survey regarding the new tools, and updated the commission on wildland response efforts for the 2026 Bonneville Fire near the University of Utah.

(01:26:34 on audio recording)

Nathan Lunstad, Director of the Utah Division of Drinking Water, discussed the Division's current initiatives, emphasizing the technical assistance provided for wildfire and drought response. He noted that drought conditions impose significant operational, quality, and quantity strains on water systems. He also outlined the Division's approach to restructuring water systems. Additionally, he noted that mandatory PFAS sampling for public water systems will take effect in 2027.

(01:36:00 on audio recording)

Sandy Wingert, Watershed Scientist for the Division of Water Quality, provided an update on the Jordan River Watershed, highlighting ongoing water quality challenges, specifically E. coli and Total Dissolved Solids (TDS). She outlined the Division's current focus on implementing E. coli compliance and tracking plans alongside voluntary, incentive based programs. Additionally, she discussed an ongoing 'flush and flow' study investigating dissolved oxygen pulse releases and reaeration to improve water quality and restore habitability for warm water aquatic life in the river's lower reaches.

(01:46:21 on audio recording)

Bryce Bird, Director of the Utah Division of Air Quality, provided an update on the Utah Dust Observation Network (UDON). The Division's research into urban dust deposition focuses on three main initiatives: expanding monitoring efforts, analyzing historical trends, and decoding dust chemistry, with an emphasis on predicting dust patterns and assessing metal concentrations.

- b) Roundtable Discussion of Jordan River Watershed Issues with Presenters, Watershed Council Members, Advisors and Staff (01:52:58 on audio recording)

Soren Simonsen noted that since the Jordan River Commission is preparing to launch its new website soon, it would be beneficial to gather data, research, and strategic planning materials from the presenters to post on the website for the public.

Laura Briefer noted that several comments and questions had been submitted in the Zoom messages during the meeting, and she invited members of the Watershed Council to reach out with any further inquiries they may have.

- c) Love Your Watershed Initiative Updates

This item was not discussed due to time constraints.

4. Watershed Council Business

- a) Adopt the March 5, 2026 and May 22, 2026 Watershed Council Meeting Minutes

This item was postponed until the next meeting due to time constraints.

- b) Jordan River Watershed Council Announcements & Information from Members and Advisors

This item was not discussed due to time constraints.

5. Adjourn

Laura Briefer moved to adjourn the meeting. Heidi Hoven seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:02 PM.

A meeting recording, presentation, handout materials, and meeting minutes are available at <https://www.utah.gov/pmn/sitemap/notice/1091123.html>

Meeting minutes prepared by Amelia Miller and Soren Simonsen, Secretary.