

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING

Public Lands Policy Coordination

August 6, 2020

Virtual Meeting via Google Hangouts

MINUTES

Attendees:

Members

Bill James, UDWR, *Chair*
David Jones for Jim Reese, *Vice Chair*, DWRI
Jan Morse, DOGM
Susan Zarekarizi, State Parks
Tom Chidsey, UGS
Elisa Albury, UDOT
Conner Peterson, UDAF
Brian Speer, UDWMRC
Christopher Merritt, SHPO
Dave Allison, DERR
Sheila Vance for Joel Karmazyn, DAQ
Marisa Weinberg, FFSL
Jodi Gardberg, DWQ
Todd Stonely, DWRe
James Dixon, GOED

Invited Federal Agencies

Tyler Ashcroft, Forest Service
Kerry Schwartz for Kelly Orr, BLM
Nicole Fresard for Jason A. Gipson, USACE

Guests

Daniel Olson, UDWR
Don Wiley, UDWR
Christine Osborne, DWQ

Staff

Sindy Smith, PLPCO
Jay Olsen, UDAF

Welcome

Bill James, *Chair*, called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. After introductions, Bill welcomed everyone.

Approval of Minutes

RDCC representatives approved the May 28, 2020 minutes.

Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR): Wildlife Migration Initiative

The Wildlife Migration Initiative involves identifying and preserving fish and wildlife migration connective corridors; corridors that allow fish and wildlife to migrate to necessary habitat areas around the state. Don Wiley leads the Aquatic Habitat Migration Program; Daniel Olson leads the Wildlife Migration Program.

Background

Don Wiley talked about the early development of the Wildlife Migration Initiative.

- In 2017, under the direction of Director Greg Sheehan, UDWR created Utah's Wildlife Migration Initiative to understand how Utah's wildlife move and what constraints obstruct habitat, such as highways. Director Sheehan had the foresight to include aquatic species, which also have constraints even though they are not as visible. The Wildlife Migration Initiative uses state-of-the-art technology to better track and study migration movement and patterns.
- UDWR launched a new website highlighting wildlife migration.

Aquatic Habitat and Migration Program

Don Wiley summarized the Aquatic Habitat Migration Program. The main discussion included the following items.

- Utah's population will see a statistically significant increase over the next 30-40 years, which will impact Utah's habitat for terrestrial, as well as aquatic species. Water demand will increase, which probably means more dams, reservoirs, and transbasin diversions. Part of the migration initiative for the aquatic program necessitates being on the frontend of the decision making process by developing partnerships through collaboration with water users.
- For 20 years UDWR has placed small tracking devices in fish species to monitor and understand their movement patterns; not on a daily basis, but as the fish pass over an antenna in a lake or a reservoir. The database UDWR developed has additional tagged species, such as boreal toads, desert tortoises, and other endangered species to understand their movement and life history. The razorback sucker in the Colorado Green River system has been tracked over time from Dinosaur National Monument down to Grand Junction, Colorado, and Lake Powell; back and forth, nearly one thousand miles. The razorback sucker navigated some extremely high waters during runoff and traversed diversion structures. The data helps UDWR understand the obstacles these species encounter. UDWR has been successful in identifying the tagged cutthroat trout's movement patterns in the Weber River drainage.
- UDWR placed a passage structure underneath I-84 that runs from the Weber River into Strawberry Creek to help fish navigate a 400 foot-long box culvert. The structure offers a

resting place for fish as they move forward. UDWR has documented the movement of fish for the first time in Strawberry Creek. This project opens up additional places for people to fish and helps restore river miles and connectivity for aquatic species to access.

- UDWR works in collaboration with PacifiCorp, UDOT, and other federal and state agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations.
- Utah State University provides ongoing research for UDWR to identify physical barriers, as well as chemical and temperature barriers, which is significant in terms of Utah's population growth and the demands on water, along with extreme temperature increases over time. Extreme temperature increases may endanger Utah's native species that favor cooler waters. Understanding fish movement in those areas remains vital to species and will lead not only to protecting habitat, but also help drive management and financial decisions within the agency and across agencies as well.
- Access UDWR's Wildlife Migration Initiative website here:
<https://wildlifemigration.utah.gov/>

Don answered questions.

Wildlife Migration Program

Daniel Olson reported on the Wildlife Migration Program. The main discussion included the following items.

- Over the past decade Utah leads as the fastest growing state in the country. With that comes change; the road system and the traffic volume have doubled in just 25 years. More cars on the road affect how animals move and use the landscape. Fortunately, technologies have evolved to a point where UDWR does a really good job of finding out what animals are doing. UDWR has placed GPS tracking devices on most species. The data has shown animals doing things UDWR did not know before tracking the animals.
- The three main pillars of the Wildlife Migration Initiative include documenting wildlife movement, working to preserve wildlife, and enhancing wildlife movement where possible.
- The initiative has involved a major tracking effort. UDWR has ramped up documenting wildlife movement. Currently UDWR has about 3,000 big game animals with GPS tracking collars. Every day UDWR's data system captures about 40,000 locations. The database holds 20 million animal locations. UDWR is partnering with Google to move the database into the cloud and to build access tools for people who make management decisions based on the information.
- UDWR uses the tracking data for planning products. UDWR looks at the tracking data to learn where animals migrate, takes those points from the GPS collars when animals are migrating, and turns the data into corridor maps. UDWR learns where the major pathways wildlife use to move between summer and winter ranges, which can be helpful when planning to keep the landscape connected for wildlife. UDWR can see where the pinch points and barriers are that have an effect on how animals travel. This information helps UDWR place wildlife crossings in the right places to help animals get across the road.
- The Department of Interior's Secretarial Order 3362, *Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors*, spurred six tracking projects in Utah; five on mule deer and one on pronghorn. UDWR will use the tracking information to improve habitat and keep wildlife connectivity in place. Daniel and Don

along with outreach folks and BYU created the website, www.wildlifemigration.utah.gov to explain issues to UDWR's partners and the public. The website also contains UDWR's core wildlife corridor maps. The website is a good resource to help understand the migration initiative and the work that is being done, as well as the wildlife tracking projects occurring throughout the state.

- The migration initiative has revealed problem areas, such as wildlife crossings, which are really important. The wildlife crossing structure built on Parley Summit cost \$5 million. Don and Daniel are looking to create solutions to generate funds to do more mitigation type work.
- To make the migration initiative long-term, UDWR will create working groups to plan projects and find funding for the projects throughout the state similar to the Water Restoration Initiative's structure. The long-term initiative would be a way for UDWR to scale up projects; to do larger, better projects.

Daniel answered questions.

Agency Reports

- Tom Chidsey reported the following from Utah Geological Survey (UGS):
 - UGS publishes *Survey Notes* three times a year, which features various UGS projects. The next issue comes out next month and includes information on the March 18th Magna earthquake. The *Energy News* column of the issue presents the effects of the coronavirus on the oil and gas production within the state.
 - UGS also publishes randomly *Utah Energy Landscapes* that covers various subjects, such as oil and gas, coal, and geothermal. UGS has been asked to produce *Utah Energy Landscapes* for the 2021 Legislative Session to focus the effects of COVID19 on all aspects of energy.
- Todd Stonely reported the following from the Division of Water Resources (DWRe):
 - The Lake Powell Pipeline Draft EIS public comment period closes September 8, 2020. If you have comments, send your comments to the Bureau of Reclamation.
 - The Bear River Development project remains in the early planning phase. Preliminary conceptual design documents were issued last fall. The environmental compliance actions on the project are about ten years away.
 - The ongoing construction work on the Millsite Reservoir dam has been extended for another year. The cracks in the spillway present challenges to secure stability.
- Marisa Weinberg reported the following from the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands (FFSL):
 - FFSL will participate in BLM's Non-Motorized Trail Development in the Lake Mountains, North Oquirrh Management Area, and Rose and Yellow Canyons project to help advise on trails, fire breaks, and impacts of increased recreation, and how it relates to human caused fire starts.
 - FFSL is in the process of a Request for Proposals for the Comprehensive Management Plans for the Green and Colorado rivers to look at motorized and non-motorized use.
- Jodi Gardberg reported the following from the Division of Water Quality (DWQ):
 - Next month DWQ will issue the combined 2018-2020 Integrative Report, which is an assessment of Utah's water quality. It covers a ten year period of an assessment of a million records.

- Tyler Ashcroft reported the following from the U.S. Forest Service:
 - Nora Rasure, the Forest Service's long-time regional forester, has retired. Frank Beum will serve as acting regional forester. Frank Beum currently served as deputy regional forester for natural resources for the Forest Service Southern Region in Atlanta Georgia.
 - Kevin Wright has accepted the position as the Forest Supervisor for the Dixie National Forest. He succeeds Forest Supervisor Angie Bullets who left the forest for a new job with the BLM in Nevada.
 - The Ashley National Forest has been without a Forest Supervisor for over a year. Susan Eickhoff has been selected as the Forest Supervisor for the Ashley National Forest. Susan comes from the Shoshone National Forest in Cody, Wyoming where she was District Ranger of the Forest.
 - The Forest Service's Shared Stewardship has been a huge focus of the Trump Administration. The primary emphasis is joint decision making with the state of Utah in terms of what projects to fund and support. Forestry Fire and State Land's website includes a list of the projects. The Forest Service this year contributed \$6.5 million to Shared Stewardship investments to improve forest conditions and protect communities and water resources from the threat of fire.
 - Top priority projects include the Upper Provo River Project; the Pinto Project located in the Pine Valley Ranger District outside of St. George; and the Beaver River Watershed Project located outside of Beaver.
 - The Forest Service appreciates working with the Division of Water Rights (DWRI). The Forest Service received a significant amount of money through the DWRI process. In total, through DWRI and Shared Stewardship, the Forest Service contributed \$13.5 million to improve forest conditions in Utah, which is a significant amount of money this fiscal year. Although \$13.5 million is still somewhat of a drop in the bucket to manage the forest health issues that remain.
- Dave Allison reported the following from the Division of Environmental Response and Remediation (DERR):
 - EPA settled a lawsuit brought by the state of Utah over the inactive Gold King Mine waste spill in southwestern Colorado five years ago that sent wastewater downstream to several states. DERR will receive \$3 million. Utah is one of the first states to settle. DERR will use the money to work on other abandoned mine reclamation projects in Utah, specifically focusing on downstream waters for future releases and Utah Lake.
- Kerry Schwartz reported the following from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM):
 - Greg Sheehan is BLM's new State Director. BLM is fortunate to have someone of Greg's caliber at BLM at this time. Greg has a long history in Utah with the Department of Natural Resources and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. Greg has served as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Principal Deputy Director in Washington D.C.
- Bill James reported the following from the Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR):
 - UDWR is working in collaboration with the BLM and the Forest Service on a multi-million dollar wildfire rehabilitation plan.
 - The State has seen an increase in black bear incidents, such as getting into camps, cabins, and camping outfits.
 - UDWR has ramped up the program of aquatic invasive species interdiction to catch boats that might be infested with the nonnative quagga mussels populating a

number of Western reservoirs. Other Western states like Wyoming are also emphasizing decontamination. It would be catastrophic if the quagga mussels spread to other water bodies.

Other Business

Next meeting: November 5, 2020

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:05 a.m.