



- + **RECOVERING** the June Sucker
- + **RESTORING** the Natural Ecosystem
- + **IMPROVING** Recreational Experiences



Spring 2017

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The purpose of recreating the Provo River delta is to help recover the endangered June sucker, and in doing so, restore the area's natural ecosystem, provide and improve recreational experiences along the existing lower Provo River and in the Delta area, and help ensure important water projects linked to June sucker recovery stay on track. To accomplish this, a majority of the lower Provo River's flow will be diverted north of its current channel into a constructed system of braided waterways and wetlands flowing into Utah Lake. A small portion of Utah Lake will be allowed to expand eastward to more closely approach its historic shoreline. The existing lower Provo River channel will continue to receive a minimum portion of the flows and a small dam will be constructed at its downstream end to maintain constant water elevation year-round. An aeration system will also be installed to improve water quality, aesthetics and odor. In addition, access to this channel will be made easier and safer.

IN THIS ISSUE

This newsletter is to provide an update on the Provo River Delta Restoration project progress since last fall. The following project aspects are highlighted in the newsletter:

- Our New Logo & Vision
- Recreation Features
- Land Acquisitions
- Project Designs
- Bird Monitoring Study
- House Concurrent Resolution 26



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more detailed project information, visit our website:
www.provriverdelta.us



PROVO RIVER DELTA

WE'VE GOT A NEW LOGO AND VISION

Because the Provo River Delta will be around for a long time and will be an inspirational setting for all to enjoy, we have developed a project logo and vision statement. The logo is shown above. This image will be used on our publications as well as on signs and educational displays throughout the project area, so people know when they see it they are in, or learning about, a special place. The quote below is from our vision statement.

The Provo River Delta Restoration Project was borne from a single idea—that restoring the delta would improve habitat conditions for the endangered June sucker. But like the branches of the river, this idea grew and expanded. It became clear that when we restore an area to its natural essence, we make it richer and more pleasant to visit, encourage wildlife to thrive in it and have the capacity to change a community's outlook on their local ecological treasures.

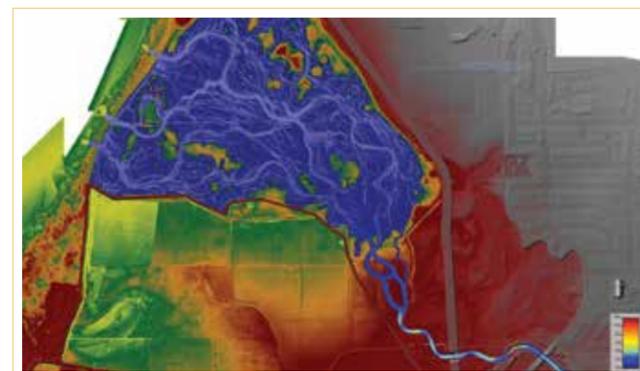
The Provo River Delta will be one of those special places in our community that is a connection between the past and the future; urban and wild; educational and experiential; functional and beautiful. It will be symbolic of our community and the environment that shapes us.

PROJECT DESIGNS

Work continues on engineering designs for the berm, small downstream dam, and water diversion features, with 30% level designs and preliminary cost estimates scheduled to be completed in early spring. The berm will be constructed on the south boundary of the restoration area to protect private lands from river flows and lake water directed into the new delta. The small downstream dam will be constructed across the lower existing Provo River channel to stabilize water levels and enhance recreation opportunities. The water diversion facility will divert a portion of the Provo River flow into the existing river channel. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is tasked with developing the designs for the small dam and berm, while Central Utah Water Conservancy District is tasked with the water diversion design.

Final designs will be completed once land needed for the project is acquired. We anticipate a 3 to 4 year construction period, which would begin no sooner than summer 2018.

Allred Restoration, Inc., who has been tasked with designing the aquatic habitat features of the restored delta, has completed an initial hydraulics model that will enable evaluation of water level and velocity conditions within the restoration area. This two-dimensional model will be a valuable tool for assessing various river flow and lake level conditions and for refining aquatic habitat designs.



The map above is one output of the hydraulics model that depicts what the water flow may look like in the restored delta area. The colored background is a digital elevation model where ground surface elevation is depicted in different colors: like colors represent like elevations. On top of the digital elevation, a model of the new river channel and delta area hydraulics is displayed. The colored bar in the lower right corner is a legend for water velocity (in feet per second) within the delta and river area. With the exception of a few short reaches in the upper river channel, all velocities are low and therefore plot out as blue in the model.

RECREATION FEATURES PLANNING



Provo River Delta Restoration Project Channel Map: Preliminary concepts for recreation amenities along the existing river channel corridor.

Improved recreation opportunities including trails, trailhead parking areas, restrooms, river access, fishing platforms, interpretive features, and viewing towers are a significant element of the delta project. To help gather input and ideas for designing and locating recreational features, we have been meeting with a recreation workgroup. This workgroup includes key agency stakeholders as well as local business owners and representatives from the fishing, birding, and boating communities. Input from this workgroup was used to inform preliminary design concepts that have been compiled in a recreation concept report, which is available on our website at: www.provoriverdelta.us/news-and-announcements/.

We will continue to coordinate closely with the recreation workgroup as design work continues. Ongoing collaboration with Provo City, Utah County, and Utah Lake State Park will also be emphasized, as long-term responsibility for managing and maintaining some project recreation features will involve them.

We are also pursuing cooperative partnerships and grant funds to supplement, enhance, and expand the scope of certain recreation amenities, such as interpretive and educational features. One such partnership evolved in connection with the planned Provo River West Trailhead area (see map above), where Utah Lake State Park, Utah County, the Provo Delta Project and the Utah Lake Commission are contributing to, and seeking others to help fund further improvements to the area.



A family dressed in their Sunday best out enjoying a peaceful paddle on the lower Provo River near Utah Lake in 1924 provides a glimpse as to what the area looked like years ago. Photo by Walter P. Cottam.

LAND ACQUISITIONS

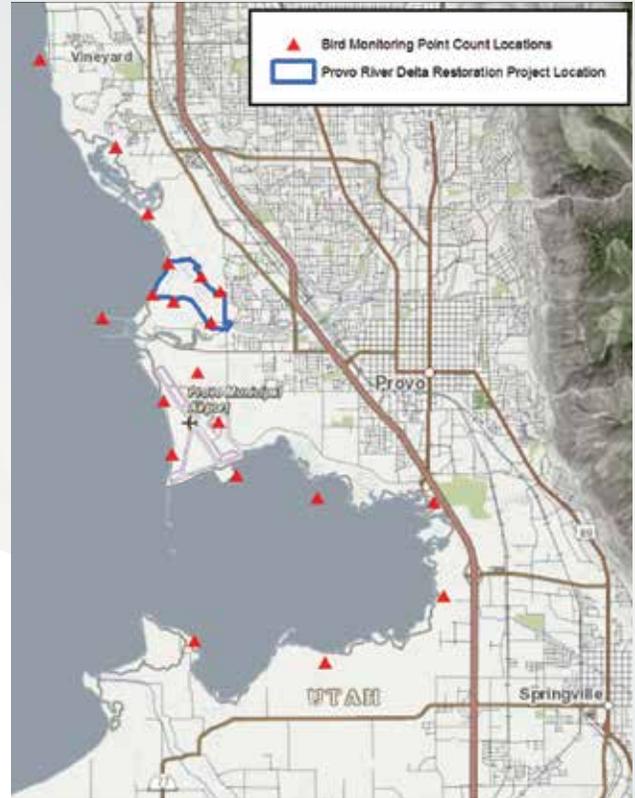
The effort to acquire land and water needed for the delta project is underway. We have been successful in acquiring land from one ownership (two parcels), shown in the map below. At the time of publishing this newsletter, three of the remaining four appraisals needed are complete, and the fourth appraisal is in progress.



BIRD MONITORING AND MOVEMENT STUDY

Early this spring we initiated a bird monitoring and movement study to help us better understand how the delta project might influence bird abundance and movement patterns. An Airport Wildlife Biologist qualified by the Federal Aviation Administration, Mr. Rick Jones, was hired to oversee the study and we contracted with Brigham Young University, Department of Wildlife and Wildlands Conservation Program to assist monitoring efforts. We are also exploring how to involve citizen birders from groups like Utah County Birders to help supplement data collection for the study.

The monitoring and movement study will gather baseline data on the abundance and movement patterns of bird species utilizing habitats in and around the project area and the Provo Airport. The study plan includes 20 different monitoring sites shown in the map to the right. Each site is to be monitored three times per week (once in the morning, once in the afternoon and once in the evening) for a period of 10 minutes each visit. Monitors will identify bird species, their location, observed activity, and direction of flight to help determine whether or not the birds are using airspace within the flight patterns of Provo Airport aircraft. Monitoring will take place during the months leading up to delta construction, during construction, and continue after construction.



UTAH LAKE RESOLUTION PASSES DURING 2017 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Utah House Concurrent Resolution 26 (HCR 26), a resolution sponsored by Representative Mike McKell and Senator Deidre Henderson, both of whom are Governing Board members of the Utah Lake Commission, passed during the 2017 legislative session. The resolution was officially adopted after passing 74-1 in the House and 28-0 in the Senate. HCR 26 should mean good things for the delta restoration project, as the resolution acknowledges support for the types of activities the project entails:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the State of Utah, the Governor concurring therein, urges an acceleration of comprehensive solutions to restore Utah Lake and improve its water quality.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor urge solutions to address challenges to Utah Lake, including water clarity, water quality, invasive species, and preserving the storage and water supply functions.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor urge solutions to restore a vibrant fishery, including restoring the Bonneville cutthroat trout population and recovering the June sucker, while improving habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife species.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor urge solutions to remove invasive plant species, restore littoral zone plant communities, and restore native plant species on Utah Lake's shoreline should be accelerated.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor urge solutions to maximize and ensure recreational access and opportunities on Utah Lake, while also improving the use of the lake for Utah and its citizens.