In the quiet hills of Cache County, residents will soon vote on a ballot initiative on whether to create a new water district and pay a new property tax.

Documents obtained through GRAMA by the URC reveal the creation of the water district is an effort to advance the Bear River Water Grab, which will create billions of dollars in taxpayer-funded construction contracts for engineering firms. To get the ballot measure passed, Cache County hired JUB Engineers, a huge engineering firm operating in 5 western states. The JUB website proudly states they have a “Thirst for Water Projects.” The Bear River provides 60% of surface water inflows to the Great Salt Lake and the

Water Quality Corner-cutting Creates Ecological Catastrophe

In August, seven miles of the American Fork River were devastated after a deluge of toxic sediment was released from Tibble Fork Reservoir. The normally clear river turned into a black sludge carrying arsenic, lead, cadmium, copper, nickel and other toxins. Fish populations were decimated for miles downstream and witnesses said the smell of rotting flesh filled the canyon.

The toxic sediment was released into the river when a rehabilitation project for the 60 year-old dam and reservoir was completely bungled. The toxic metals

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Toxic Algae Blooms The Result Of Climate Change & Utah’s Water Waste

Utahns were horrified to see toxic algae blooms both in Utah Lake and Scofield Reservoir that sickened hundreds of people, killed thousands of fish and closed recreational use. The state is grappling with an unprecedented cyanobacteria crisis that is the result of nutrient loading, climate change and a lack of leadership.

As air temperatures increase we can expect reduced snowpacks and earlier spring runoff, which means diminished river flows each summer. Less water and higher temperatures means warmer waters and less oxygen in our rivers. Combined with nutrient loads this translates into higher water pollution concentrations.

The Utah Rivers Council produced a 2012 climate change report, which summarized these problems and recommended that agencies and local governments prepare climate adaptation reports as are being prepared across the U.S. Yet Utah water suppliers are years behind the rest of the West in preparing for the impacts of climate change. Some Utah officials insist this growing problem is just the result of heat waves.

The Utah Lake algae bloom is also the result of massive quantities of water being diverted out of the Lake to the gutters of Salt Lake County, something completely ignored by Utah officials and the media. Gutters and canals were brimming with Utah Lake water, clogging storm drains, collecting pollution and flooding residential streets.

This water once irrigated farmland, but as farms were paved the water didn’t get transferred to municipal uses and just flows through old canals and gutters. Few realize this surplus water is almost entirely unused and that this water waste contributed to Utah Lake’s toxic algae blooms. The level of Utah Lake would be higher today if we simply didn’t let this unused agricultural water run down our streets and gutters.

Rather than making excuses, our focus should be on preparing for a drier future and keeping enough water in our rivers, lakes and reservoirs to prevent algae blooms and ensure the health of fish, wildlife and the public.
Water Agency Corner-cutting Creates Ecological Disaster

originated from abandoned gold and silver mines at the river’s headwaters and accumulated in the sediment behind the dam over decades, which reduced the 10-acre reservoir’s water storage capacity.

State and federal officials greatly underestimated the amount of sediment behind the dam. When the reservoir was drained to begin work on the aging dam, which was in danger of failure, the river began to carve a small canyon through more than ten feet of toxic black grit, sending it down the river.

The agency responsible for the catastrophe is the Northern Utah County Water District, who owns the dam and makes money from delivering water. Appallingly, after the spill happened, the District never notified state or federal regulators and evidently hoped nobody would notice. A member of the public reported the spill on August 21st, two days after the toxic release began. While the state has issued a notice of violation to the District, no fine has been imposed.

This ecological disaster could have easily been avoided, but the District and regulators turned their heads the other way. Water officials should have required the clean up of this toxic pile in the water supply of downstream users. Rather than addressing the problem and removing the toxic metals, engineers decided to just raise the dam 9 feet at a cost of $7.3 million.

But now mitigation for the toxic spill will take years and cost at least $20 million with state and federal taxpayers having to pick up the tab. Had the District simply removed the toxic material properly it would have only cost $8.4 million. This ecological catastrophe occurred in one of the Wasatch Front’s most popular fishing areas and at least 7 miles of the river are now polluted with toxic metals, which concentrate in the tissues of organisms.

If a fine is imposed by the Department of Environmental Quality it will likely be on the order of tens of thousands of dollars. Such paltry penalties hardly send a signal to other polluters. With 18,000 abandoned mines across Utah this sort of thing will continue to happen again and again unless we begin to hold these officials accountable.
Bear River Water Grab Rises From The Dead

Continued from cover

Bear River Water Grab is one of the largest water projects proposed in North America. This massive, $2 billion project would divert as much water as 1.7 million Americans use in a year to the lawns of the Wasatch Front.

The project would include three new dams and divert the river upstream of the Great Salt Lake, thereby lowering the level of the lake 2-4 feet, drying up tens of thousands of acres of wetlands. These wetlands are vital habitat for 8 million migratory birds across 250 species traveling from as far south as Chile, north to the Arctic Circle and as far west as Siberia. Many species gather at the Lake in larger populations than anywhere else on the planet. Lowering the level of the Lake would expose vast tracts of lakebed, thereby increasing particulate air pollution along the Wasatch Front.

If formed, the Cache Water District would collect property taxes from County residents, which would likely be used to hire lobbyists for the purpose of advancing the Bear River Water Grab at the Utah Legislature. Water suppliers have invested $1 million in lobbying the Legislature over the last two sessions for the Bear River Water Grab and the Lake Powell Pipeline.

Cache County residents have voted against forming a water district twice before, which was voted down by 70% of residents. The URC has been working to inform Cache County residents about the water district proponent’s true motives and has been holding meetings and hosting events in the County over the last several months. Even if residents vote down the district for a third time, district proponents have said they will continue to try for a forth time.

The URC is dedicated to stopping this project and will work to ensure the Bear River flows to the Great Salt Lake for future generations. As part of this effort we have launched the Bear River Coalition, a group of individuals and organizations working together to protect the Bear River and the amazing the Great Salt Lake. This is a really big lift and we need your support at this crucial time for our campaign. Your donation ensures we have the resources we need to stop this disastrous project and only takes a few seconds by going to savethebearriver.org.
Lobbyist’s Secret Plan for Bear River Water Grab & Lake Powell Pipeline Exposed

Dozens of URC supporters attended the Water Strategy Advisory Committee meeting in September where water lobbyists unveiled their secret lobbying plan. The Advisory Team is dominated by water lobbyists who will take their plan to the Governor for approval. Although the public was not allowed to comment or see the secret plan, much of it was paid for with public tax dollars. At the meeting, Utah Rivers Council staff stepped up and demanded the public be allowed to speak. Instead, the lobbyists turned off the lights and played a video while the public shouted their concerns about this shady process run by special interests.

At the meeting the water lobbyists stated they want this report to be utilized for the 2017 Legislative Session, which is why they did not want to distribute it to the public or receive direct public comment. The lobbyist’s plan is openly hostile towards water conservation efforts and using surplus, unused water from farms that are no longer using their water. The plan ignores the least expensive options to provide water for growth in favor of building destructive new water projects like the Lake Powell Pipeline and the Bear River Water Grab.

For two years these lobbyists have stifled public input and withheld the truth that inexpensive alternative water sources exist in favor of pushing massive, destructive water projects. Now is the time to make sure our voices are heard! Tell Gov. Herbert that his Advisory Committee is a farce and that he should scrap these lobbyists’ secret plan immediately before they distribute it to legislators as marketing for special interest legislation. Governor Herbert’s Office: 801-538-1000.

Lake Mead Levels: Another Warning Sign Ignored By Utah

In August, the Bureau of Reclamation announced it is likely they will cut water deliveries to lower Colorado River Basin states in 2018, should Lake Mead continue to fall next year. Despite the Bureau’s warning, the Utah Division of Water Resources is proposing the largest diversion of the Colorado River, the Lake Powell Pipeline, and has spent $30 million so far on permitting. At a time when other Colorado River Basin states are aggressively pursuing water conservation initiatives, Utah is recklessly proposing to take water from the over-tapped river and deliver it to the nation’s biggest water wasters in St. George, Utah.

The Colorado River is the water supply for 30 million people in the Southwest, and is critical for the survival of thousands of species of fish and wildlife. Instead of spending $2-4 billion on a pipeline to divert another 28 billion gallons of water from the river annually, now is the time to conserve water in a meaningful way. This will benefit all Utah taxpayers and all living beings that depend on the Colorado, the hardest working river in America.

Above: In September, federal and state water officials; URC staff and the public toured the proposed route of the Lake Powell Pipeline. The project is currently in permitting with a Draft Environmental Impact Statement expected next fall. P: N. Schou
Welcome New URC Staff!

We are excited to introduce two new staff members! We hope you have the chance to meet them in the upcoming months.

**Darin Mann** is our new Outreach Director and has hit the ground running organizing community meetings, creating partnerships and organizing individuals to protect our precious rivers. Chances are you’ve already touched base with Darin through an email, phone call, or social media post. Before joining the URC, Darin founded the United Progressive Coalition, a movement dedicated to pushing progressive legislation, and we are psyched to have him on board during this pivotal point in our campaigns.

**Taylor Timmerman** is our new Wateroots Director, working to broaden our marketing and oversee the success of our campaigns. Taylor received two bachelor’s degrees from the University of North Carolina in Political Science and Environmental Studies and is currently pursuing a Master of Public Administration at the University of Utah. We’re thrilled to have her join the team!

RainHarvest Wildly Popular in 2016

Our RainHarvest program had another banner year in 2016 as northern Utah residents once again clamored to capture free, legal, rainwater. RainHarvest makes conserving water cheap and easy for residents who want to reduce demand on municipal water systems and improve water quality of local rivers and lakes. Once someone captures rainwater, they also grow passionate about conserving water and more aware of how our water use is connected to our rivers and the wildlife species they support.

This year, a limited quantity of rain barrels were offered for just $50 each and the program went viral. The URC connected with thousands of Utahns eager to learn more about conserving water and protecting rivers. To date, Salt Lake County, Murray, Sandy, Park City, Summit County, Ogden and Eagle Mountain have partnered with the Utah Rivers Council to distribute over 3200 rain barrels to Utah residents. This means every time it rains enough to fill a 50-gallon barrel, 160,000 gallons of water are conserved.

*Above: The awesome new members of the URC team; Outreach Director, Darin Mann (pictured left) and Wateroots Director, Taylor Timmerman*

*Above: Volunteers passing out rain barrels in June 2016. If you would like to help us bring in your city as a partner to offer discounted rain barrels to your neighbors please contact nick@utahrivers.org. P: E.P. Kosmicki*
Yes! I Want to Support the Utah Rivers Council!
To be a strong voice for your rivers we need your help, now more than ever.

Questions? Call 801-486-4776 or email taylor@utahrivers.org

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□ Please charge my: Visa Mastercard Discover (circle one)

Credit card number Exp. date Signature

Address City Zip

□ I’d like to contribute monthly as part of the River Defender Club.
Charge the above card every month the following amount: __________

URC Merchandise

□ NEW Embroidered Baseball Hat: $20

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□ NEW Embroidered Soft Shell Vest: FREE with $150 donation

□ URC T-Shirt: $20
Charcoal Grey

□ URC Logo Stickers: Free!

□ URC Steel River Mug: $18

Circle size:

Small Medium Large XL XXL

Contributions to Utah Rivers Council are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law.
Did you know?
More than 80% of all Utah’s wildlife species depend on rivers for at least part of their life cycles.

We’ve Moved Offices!
The URC office has moved down the hall in the same building.
1055 East 2100 South, Suite 201, SLC, UT 84106

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