



Save
Something

WATERLINES

Utah Proposing West's Largest River Diversions Lake Powell Pipeline Camouflaged in \$32 Billion Funding Request

State water officials are calling for a staggering \$32 billion in new government spending to finance a laundry list of boondoggle water projects, like the proposed Lake Powell Pipeline and Bear River Development. The state's largest water suppliers are erroneously claiming Utah will face economic disaster unless this massive tide of government spending is initiated.

The group is using scare-tactics to claim Utah is running out of water, when in truth Utahns have the highest water use (per person) in the U.S. because these same water suppliers encourage customers to waste water by lowering water prices through property tax collections on homes and businesses. The four water agencies behind this marketing campaign currently collect over \$82 million in property taxes each year, which explains why Utah has some of America's cheapest water prices.

The boondoggle Lake Powell Pipeline has become so unpopular that project proponents recently took a trip to Washington DC to try and paint a rosy picture for the federal agencies being asked to approve its construction. This taxpayer-funded lobbying trip and \$32 billion wish list are last-ditch efforts to scare Utahns, their lawmakers and federal agencies into authorizing and funding what the Salt Lake Tribune recently called the boondoggle of all boondoggles, the Lake Powell Pipeline.

Water Resources Proposing to Divert Bear River & Lower Great Salt Lake

In September, conservationists everywhere were shocked to learn the Utah Division of Water Resources is advancing the proposed \$2 billion diversion of Bear River water. Since the Bear River provides nearly 60 percent of the Great Salt Lake's surface water inflow each year, the proposed diversion would create a cascade of impacts on both the Lake's wetlands and the millions of birds that depend upon this ecosystem to rest and refuel themselves during their migrations across the globe.

The proposed water development would divert an incredible 220,000 acre-feet of water, thereby reducing the Lake's elevation by 2-4 feet. This would dry up tens of thousands of acres of shoreline wetlands which provide habitat for 250 bird species totaling 8-10 million birds migrating from every country in Central and South America.



The proposed diversion would have devastating impacts on the Great Salt Lake, the West's largest wetland ecosystem. p: Bryant Olsen

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Thanks to Everyone for an Amazing Evening for Utah's Rivers!

Thanks to all who made it out to our *Life in the Bee-Have State* dinner at Frida Bistro. Nearly 200 fellow river lovers joined URC staff, board members, volunteers and special guest Pat Bagley to celebrate our amazing rivers and ensure they will flow into the future. The event was a huge success thanks in large part to URC supporters and generous donations from a variety of contributors. It was one amazing party for Utah's great rivers!



A special thank you to Salt Lake Tribune cartoonist Pat Bagley and historian Will Bagley for their hugely entertaining presentations.

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Are You Harvesting the Rain?

It's free and it's legal, even in Utah. So why are so few Utahns harvesting the rain? The URC has launched Rain-Harvest, a program to engage homeowners and businesses in collecting rainwater to reduce outdoor water use and improve water quality of streams, rivers and lakes by reducing urban runoff in streets and gutters.

A rainwater harvesting revolution is sweeping the country and scores of U.S. cities are promoting and distributing rain barrels to residents at a reduced price. Because urban Utahns have some of the highest water use in the U.S. (per person) and 70 percent of Utah's residential water is used outside the home, Rain-Harvest is a good way to teach residents how to be sustainable water users.

Getting Utahns to conserve water is vital as the Jordan Valley, Weber Basin and Washington County Water Districts are proposing billions in new diversions on Utah's amazing rivers— just to provide additional lawn water for urban Utahns. These water agencies are ignoring the fact that massive government spending on unnecessary water infrastructure brings a host of economic impacts that burden taxpayers for generations, while simple conservation practices like rainwater harvesting provide water for pennies on the dollar.



**Call your mayor or council member and ask them if they are a partner in RainHarvest.
For more information call Nick: nick@utahrivers.org**

BluePrint Utah: Your Water Footprint Calculator

Many of us just turn on a tap or the hose without thinking about where our water comes from or how our water use affects rivers and wetland ecosystems. Few Utahns realize that wasteful water use is the primary driver behind the billions of dollars in proposed dams and diversions in the state. To help Utahns better understand how their water use is connected to the survival of our river ecosystems, the URC has launched a new online portal called BluePrint Utah.

Find out how much you use at BluePrintUtah.org

This regionally specific, interactive tool calculates and compares participants' water use footprint, or BluePrint, to typical water users across the West and educates them on the current threats to Utah's rivers. Once participants understand how their water use stacks up to the rest of the West, they're given resources to find out how they can help protect Utah's rivers with simple conservation practices. The fascinating online portal was developed in a partnership with the University of Utah Office of Sustainability in an effort to institute permanent water conservation and sustainable water use practices at the University of Utah and across the State through a mixture of education and technology.



State Water Agency Pushes for New Dams on the Bear River

Continued from cover

The Division of Water Resources, the Jordan Valley Water District and the Weber Basin Water District have hired a lobbying firm to market fear to Utahns that we are running out of water and need Bear River development to avoid our own extinction. In truth, the purpose of proposed Bear River development is to provide additional lawn water for Davis, Weber and Salt Lake County residents. The Division is being audited by the Legislative Auditor General after widespread criticism that their water use projections are inflated.

Several inexpensive alternative water sources exist which could provide water for the future. The fact that Wasatch Front residents are among the biggest users of municipal water (per person) in the U.S. is but one indicator these residents are not running out of water. Utah is decades behind other arid western states in implementing meaningful water conservation measures, instead encouraging residents to waste water by lowering water prices with property taxes.

A consultant hired by the Division presented a plan to the Cache County Council summarizing how the proposed water project would divert Bear River water through a series of dams and pipelines upstream of its confluence with the Great Salt Lake. The recently completed 607 page Bear River Pipeline Concept report reviews nine possible reservoir sites and offers three distinct scenarios of dam and pipeline combinations that would provide 220,000 acre-feet of water storage. All of the scenarios would require the development of at least two new reservoirs.

All the sites proposed would inundate precious wetland ecosystems. Not only are there huge environmental costs associated with these proposed dams and pipelines, but the estimated cost of construction alone would be nearly \$2 billion, requiring large increases in water rates for Wasatch Front residents to pay for the project.

Many in the water supply community believe that water development itself is an intrinsic good and are openly hostile to water conservation. Readers finding this concept surprising should listen to the audio from the September 18th 2014 Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environmental Quality Appropriations Subcommittee meeting, just one legislative committee openly describing this belief. (<http://le.utah.gov/asp/interim/Commit.asp?year=2014&com=APPNAE#>)

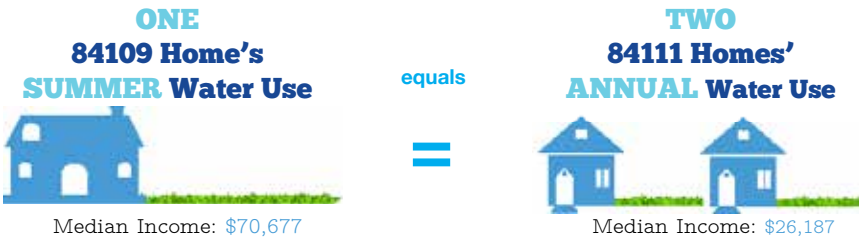
Before any approval of this proposed diversion could occur, a full NEPA process would have to begin, meaning scoping meetings around the Wasatch Front and the preparation of a lengthy environmental impact statement. For now, the Division and their consultant are continuing to present their report in an effort to convince your elected officials to fund the destruction of the greatest wetland ecosystem remaining in the entire West.



*The Great Salt Lake is home to the world's largest breeding population of White-faced Ibis.
photo: Dan Pancamo*

New Research: Low Income Families Soaked by Water Taxes

Robin Rothfeder, a PhD student in the University of Utah’s Ecological Planning Center, recently spent two years compiling data about water use in Salt Lake City and found Utah’s unique system of collecting property taxes for water forces low income households to pay for others to waste water.



A high-income household in Salt Lake City uses as much water in the summer as the annual water use of two low-income households.

Utahns’ property taxes for water go directly to government water suppliers to lower the price of water and encourage individuals, businesses and especially government institutions to waste water. These water taxes are the reason Utah has America’s cheapest water rates and why Utahns are among the most wasteful users of water (per person) in the entire U.S.

At first glance low water rates may seem beneficial for low-income Utahns, until one examines the water taxes they are forced to pay. Rothfeder analyzed hundreds of thousands of water bills in Salt Lake City and learned that low-income families use most of their water inside the home, unlike high-income residents who use most of their water outside the home. This explains why low-income residents use just a small fraction of the water used by high-income households.

If one examines total water payments made in both water taxes and water rates, low-income residents are paying a larger percentage of their water payments through property taxes than do high-income residents. Taken together it means that low-income residents are paying taxes that subsidize large lot landowners to use water, including both higher income households and government institutions that pay no taxes. Property taxes for water also unfairly burden low-income families because these taxes constitute a larger percentage of their total income.

How Much Water Could We Save?

If property taxes for water were phased out, everyone would pay the full cost of the water they use. According to a model created by a group of academics at the University of Utah, phasing out property taxes for water would save millions of gallons of water, practically overnight. Reducing this water waste would save billions of dollars in government spending on water conveyance projects such as new diversions and treatment plants. Virtually all the opposition to phasing out these water taxes comes from the agencies that collect them, an obvious financial conflict of interest.

The Substantial Savings from Phasing Out the Water Tax for Utah Cities

City	Water Savings	Current Rate at 15,000 gal	Change in Rate	Average Property Tax Refund
Salt Lake City	-16%	\$2.15	\$0.93	\$98
Sandy	-14%	\$2.63	\$0.96	\$109
South Jordan	-13%	\$1.77	\$0.55	\$116
West Jordan	-25%	\$1.26	\$0.98	\$80
Riverton	-24%	\$1.33	\$0.95	\$101
Herriman	-15%	\$1.85	\$0.73	\$105
Bluffdale	-26%	\$1.95	\$1.57	\$153
St. George	-27%	\$1.00	\$0.88	\$193

A model from the University of Utah estimates that eliminating the water tax would save homeowners hundreds of dollars in taxes, while substantially reducing communities’ water use.

New Basin-Wide Coalition Launched to Protect the Colorado River Headwaters

The headwaters of the Colorado River are under a growing threat of pollution, diversions and climate change. Thousands of new oil and gas fracking wells are being pursued on top of the thousands that exist in Colorado, Wyoming and Utah. Massive energy strip mining is being proposed through tar sands and oil shale projects in Utah. The drought impacting the Colorado River Basin has strained cities like Phoenix, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles. Proposed projects like the Lake Powell Pipeline, Price River Dam and Green River nuclear power plant would unnecessarily deplete the river even more. With the impacts of climate change looming, these developments threaten the water supply of millions of people as well as threatened and endangered species in key ecosystems, including the Grand Canyon.

That's why the Colorado River Connected coalition has been launched to stop threats to the Colorado River Headwaters. The alliance partners include the URC, Waterkeeper Alliance, Sierra Club, Glen Canyon Institute, Los Angeles Waterkeeper, Living Rivers Colorado Riverkeeper, River Network, Save The Colorado, American Whitewater and Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment. Colorado River Connected hopes to engage residents of the Colorado River Basin to speak out with one powerful voice against the unnecessary dirty energy extraction projects and new river diversions that are going on all along the Colorado River.

We are happy to announce Alev Bilginsoy and Kristin Dobbin are new staff members of CRC who will be responsible for the research and outreach coordination for the coalition. With their help, the Colorado River Connected will work to educate residents living across the Colorado River Basin how proposed projects in the headwaters states like Utah affect their livelihoods.



Colorado River Connected
Your Headwaters. Your River. Your Community.
www.coloradoriverconnected.org

Green River Proposed for Wild and Scenic River Designation

The Green River through Red Canyon has recently been proposed for wild and scenic designation as part of Daggett County's portion of Rep. Rob Bishop's Public Lands Initiative. The current proposal would designate 14 miles of the popular fishing and floating sections of the Green below Flaming Gorge Dam, commonly known as the "A" and "B" sections. This is great news as the URC has called for the entire Green River in Utah to be designated wild and scenic, as well as other amazing rivers throughout Utah for nearly 20 years.

While the proposal is still in its early stages, receiving wild and scenic designation would create permanent protection for the Colorado River's largest tributary if Congress were to pass legislation out of the process. Make sure to sign up for our email newsletter at utahrivers.org to stay updated on this exciting process.



*Red Canyon of the Green is one of the world's premiere fly fishing destinations
Photo: Ray Bloxham*

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 nick@utahrivers.org

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Want to Run Utah's Amazing Green River in 2015?

Support the URC and run the Green River through the Gates of Lodore, on a 4-day rafting trip for 2 with the great folks at Dinosaur River Expeditions. This trip sets off from the banks of the Green River in historic Brown's Park in Colorado and continues through some of the finest whitewater rafting in Utah. The URC is auctioning this trip by a mail-in auction, with a minimum bid of \$995. The highest bidder by the December 15th deadline will win this amazing trip.

To place a bid contact nick@utahrivers.org
or call the URC at 801-486-4776.