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New study includes 13 conceptual design scenarios, updated hydrology and cost estimates

State of Utah Updates Bear River Development Feasibility Study

(Salt Lake City) – The latest study regarding the Bear River Development (BRD) project has been released by the Utah Division of Water Resources and includes 13 potential reservoir combinations and pipeline alignments, as well as updated costs. At full development, the project will deliver 220,000 acre-feet of water per year to Utahns in Box Elder, Cache, Davis, Salt Lake and Weber counties. Four water districts will purchase and deliver the water as allowed by the [Bear River Development Act](#), which was passed by the Utah Legislature in 1991.

“These latest scenarios build on previous studies and update hydrology, data and population projections,” said Eric Millis, director of the Division of Water Resources. “When the legislation passed almost 30 years ago, the projected need for this water was in 2015. Thanks primarily to conservation efforts, new technology and some smaller water development projects, current projections indicate the need for this project has been pushed out between 2045 to 2050.”

Thirteen different conceptual design scenarios have also been evaluated to determine the most effective and least costly potential reservoir combinations. Cost estimates for the different scenarios range from \$1.5 to \$2.8 billion. The Act indicates that the state will fund the planning, studies, design, construction and environmental mitigation costs of the BRD system. The four water districts that will purchase and deliver the water will repay the state.

“As development has increased, particularly in Weber and Box Elder counties, we recognized the need to acquire land and rights-of-way [as authorized in the Act] to reduce future impacts to surrounding communities and also save costs,” said Marisa Egbert, planning manager for the project. “We are currently working with willing sellers and UTA to acquire properties for corridor preservation.”

The BRD system is expected to deliver 220,000 acre-feet annually. However, not all the water is expected to be depleted from the watershed. Much is expected to return to the watershed in the form of “return flows.” At full development, an estimated 85,600 acre-feet would be depleted from the watershed. Current modeling indicates this amount of depletion from the Great Salt Lake watershed would reduce the lake level by an average of about 8.5 inches and as much as 14 inches according to a [White Paper](#) published in 2016 by Utah State University, Water Resources, Salt Lake Community College and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources.

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Utah Department of Natural Resources Water Resources

The project is currently in the planning phase and will eventually undergo an environmental process through the National Environmental Policy Act prior to final design and construction. The next steps in the planning phase include additional studies concerning climate variability and Great Salt Lake modeling, studying additional pipeline corridor options and corridor preservation.

To review the feasibility study, please visit Water.Utah.Gov/Bear-River. For more information, contact Kim Wells, public information officer, at 801-803-0336 or kimwells@utah.gov.

About the Bear River Development

In 1991, the Utah Legislature passed the [Bear River Development Act](#), [Utah Code 73-26], which authorizes and directs the Division of Water Resources to “ ... develop the surface waters of the Bear River and its tributaries through the planning and construction of reservoirs and associated facilities ...”

As outlined in the Bear River Development Act, the system would deliver 220,000 acre-feet at full development. The following districts will deliver the water:

- Bear River Water Conservancy District – 60,000 acre-feet
- Cache Water District – 60,000 acre-feet
- Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District 50,000 acre-feet
- Weber Basin Water Conservancy District – 50,000 acre-feet

The Division of Water Resources has released a 2019 feasibility study, which includes refined conceptual level planning for a BRD system that would include reservoirs, pipelines, pump stations and other facilities. Multiple options of reservoirs and pipeline corridors have been studied and cost estimates have been updated. The 2019 study builds on the [2014 Pipeline Concept Report](#).

Visit Water.Utah.Gov/Bear-River for more information and to view the studies.

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