

Bear River Watershed Council Meeting

Minutes (Approved)

Attendees

Christie Hansen – North Park Irrigation Co	Melissa Early - DWR
Mark Scadden – Bear Lake Watch	Shawn Milne - BRAG
Matt Yost - USU	Steve Griffin – Newton Dam
Carl Mackley – BRWCD	Burdette Weston - Rancher
Mark Hurd – Cache Water District	Nate Daus – Cache Water District
ValJay Rigby – Farm Bureau	Blake Bingham
Ann Neville – The Nature Conservancy	Trevor Nielson – Bear River Canal Co
Jake Serago – Division of Water Resources	Connely Baldwin - PacifiCorp
Laura Vernon – Division of Water Resources	Claudia Cottle – Bear Lake Watch
Carly Payne – Division of Water Resources	Kurt Lindley
James DeRito – Trout Unlimited	Rowdy Jensen - FFSL
Jeannie Simmonds – Logan City Council	Hollee Wood – Langdon Group
Andy Rasmussen – Langdon Group	
Mike Dumpey (in place of Erin Holmes) – Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge	

Welcome

Report on July 13 Utah Watersheds Council

- We are now official with the Statewide Council
- We will need to add an anchor location to our organizing documents and will do so later on in this meeting
- Lewis Chandler resigned and we will need to vote in a replacement for him. Mark Scadden with Bear Lake Watch is here and willing to participate on the council, we will vote on this switch later on in the meeting
- What have your challenges and successes been this summer?
 - Strategic metering
 - All reservoirs filled up
 - Afraid of losing the beach at Bear Lake – good because of the high water, but also stressful
 - Similarly, high water levels in general, they are very good for overall health of system, but did increase flooding concerns and occurrences
 - Increase in invasive species funding – tripled funding
 - Water monitoring, diversions, and utilization and monitoring at Bear River Bird refuge
 - Cyclical use – water turning off at night and needs throughout the day
 - Consequence of increase in funds – cost of things for projects has increased
 - Increased attention of all things related to water – increased urgency for needing to change but not time to plan to do so
 - Political nature of water in the area
 - Putting a lot of water through aging infrastructure during this wet year
 - Dry year to wet year – helping public to see that drought plans are still necessary

- Growth – plan for and manage growth and use to protect water and efficient use
- Keeping Bear Lake at the “goldilocks” level
- Extended snow throughout the Spring and concern that causes for spillover during wintertime
- Waterfowl habitat and wetlands were bolstered by the water, but was challenging for big game
- Increase in jobs and commerce

New Information and Updates

Carl Mackley – Legislative Update: Senate Bills 34 and 76

Water infrastructure funding study: Senate Bill 34

Property taxes funding water infrastructure is a hot topic right now. The study focuses on the pros and cons of doing so

Bill can be viewed here: [SB0034 \(utah.gov\)](#)

Study the use of property tax revenue to fund water infrastructure

Consultant has been selected to do this work and is planning on working on it for the next year or so

Bill asks Utah to compare what we are doing here to other states who do and do not fund water infrastructure

Senate Bill 76 – Water Amendments

Bill can be viewed here: [SB0076 \(utah.gov\)](#)

Updates existing code, provides for study that addresses grants for environmental improvement projects

Addresses consultation with UDAF

Requires counties to notify certain public water systems and request feedback on how elements of the general plan affect certain water planning

Requires the DWRe to consult with local watershed councils

Gives money to DWRe

Lots of changes have occurred recently in the legislature and its good to be up to date and have a plan for these changes

These bills are an example of how the state is trying to encourage different water users to speak with one another and be aware of what others are doing and struggling with. Want to include these different users in the planning process.

Question: has there been equalization of drinking water? Meaning that when one city or area has no water and a different city or area has more than it needs, the water will be distributed accordingly?

Answer: There is consideration for that. Drinking water and secondary water are very interrelated. Having secondary water can decrease the expense and need for culinary water and changes the need for treating water and includes different standards for water quality.

Jake Serago – Presentation on Bear River Project and mathematical modeling

Bear River Development Act

Does modeling to play out different scenarios and see what could and does and doesn't work in any scenario

Bear river development act was passed in 1981 that mandates DWRe to develop waters of the Bear River

Specifies 4 groups to receive 222,000 acre-feet of water: BRWCD, Cache Water District, JWCD, and WBWCD

Several studies to look at different infrastructure projects - pipelines and pumping facilities - costs, feasibility, etc...

Some sites have been eliminated due to their controversial nature (controversy could be due to environmental reasons, geographic reasons, cultural reasons. A few areas have been deemed the most feasible, those are the South Willard Reservoir and Whites valley reservoir, However, both are off stream and would require pumping.

Feasibility is continuously being updated (construction costs, new concerns, new challenges) and this is a living document

Looking into right of way acquisitions and easements - potentially work with UTA to combine needed easements for their rail line and this proposed pipeline project

Future: additional simulations, changes due to climate change, water right considerations, assessing impacts to other water users (bird refuge and GSL)

Question: with the allotments for Bear River development - are these numbers reasonable/realistic? Are these "wet water"?

Answer: The recent feasibility report would say yes, but it requires those additional reservation sites. Additional questions still need to be answered moving forward.

There is currently not a lot of pressure to move this project forward, and DWRe does what the legislation says to do

Question: Districts have been buying up water rights since the 1980s. How does that play into that?

Answer: any water rights that any district has been obtaining isn't related to this, these water rights are held by the Division of Water Rights board

Statewide Water Budget

Tool divides state into 152 sub areas - supply and demand over historical period (1980 to 2022)

Data comes from lots of different sources, and all info that goes into and out of this is available online here: [Water Budget - Home | Utah Open Water Data \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)

Bear River Commission Depletions

Depletion study is to be done every year

Consumptive use after 1976

Does not give total allocation to 3 states, it gives allocation in addition to what was grandfathered in prior to 1976

Estimate how much water is being used for consumptive use for irrigation, municipal, industrial, and reservoir evaporation (in reservoirs built after 1976)

Question: how do you figure that our depletion levels have been going down, but water that is going to GSL is decreasing? If we have been using less water, that water should be making it to the Lake, right?

Answer: Water that makes it to GSL can go down for lots of reasons and there are many different sources of water that make it to the GSL. These depletions are just focused on Bear River, but there are other tributaries that feed into the lake.

Question: Do these models check the quantity of farms that have gone down with these consumptive use over the same time period?

Answer: That is the majority. Depletion has increased in Idaho nearly the same amount that it has decreased in Bear River. Net increase from 1976, but primarily the cause of decrease in the lower division in Utah is because of urbanization (conversion of farms to development). We do a land-use survey, particularly land-use as it relates to water, statewide every year, so we do track closely both ag and urban lands to track trends and changes year to year.

Follow-up Question: Are you saying that Urbanization is better for water conservation?

Answer: No, you cannot make a blanket statement like that. There are a lot of different considerations. There are also lots of goals that we want to address (wildlife, etc....)

Comment: The Bear River Canal Company is very involved in the compact. Something to consider with this: these numbers are pretty small compared to our water in the basin. Depletions were calculated very differently in each of these years and that can make a difference and exasperate changes. Mapping capabilities were much worse in 1990 and that also makes a difference. Accuracy in data collection has also gotten better. All of these contribute to these numbers.

We are in a macro-drought. We are not the only basin that dumps into GSL. Consider the development that some of the other basins are experiencing currently and how that's going to impact GSL.

Joint Bear River Planning

Collaborative approach between several states

Getting questions from decision makers, interpret operations, gather data, bi-weekly work sessions, interim sharing and communication, model versioning, consider future build-out, CADSWES

Simplification of the real world - represent the important aspects of the real world - scenario based planning

Create recommendations based off that learning

Plan for future work by using this plan. This tool is available online.

Ann Neville – Presentation on Bear River Watershed Planning

We have more asking power in this room than we realize

Lower Bear River Watershed action plan

Plan started with the entire watershed but was later reduced to lower portion due to proximity and logistic challenges

Created SWOT for watershed by sending out survey to users

Some major takeaways from that: watershed is collaborative but not communicative, one weakness was that we didn't include all the right people (some water users were left out), some opportunities were that more people could be recruited for this effort and prioritization of needs could occur, some threats were environmental issues, relevance, and funding

Top cumulative threats: habitat degradation, development of open space, reduced water supply, and degraded water supply

There are many human systems to consider. Also need to include ecological considerations happening as well.

Read through studies and plans and gathered information from them

Lacked goal and objective. Created one for this plan that could maybe work for the Bear River Watershed council

If we don't want to have our goals be similar to these goals, that is ok too, but we should create clearly defined goals and objectives for this group or we won't be effective

We can expect resources from DWRe to help. We can ask for resources if we aren't receiving them. Essentially, we are being told to be the squeaky wheel.

There were many different groups working to address the same threats. Are they working together? We can bring these different groups together and help foster good collaboration

Ideas that were thought of for this plan could be incorporated or used as a template as we move forward with watershed council

choose ways we may want to advice the state watershed council

Review this watershed plan for ideas to adopt for our council

Develop a goal to give us purpose and direction

Take the survey to determine if the situation compares to this watershed council

Ann will send out the website that includes the documents shared during this presentation

Could be helpful to look at survey again to help jumpstart this group and to help inform our goals and objectives

Public Comment

None

Administration Business

Vote on BRWC Organizing Document

Virtual meetings are a "may" not a "must"

In order for us to have a virtual meeting, one of the council members needs to request virtual access at least 24 hours before the meeting

We can also meet in different physical locations to help accommodate people who travel from different parts of the watershed

Organizing document needs to include anchor location

Christie Hansen moves for motion to be made to include Bear River Water Conservancy District as anchor location

Jeannie Simmonds makes this motion

Nate Daus seconded motion

Motion Unanimously approved

Vote on BRWC membership position(s) vacated by the resignations of Lara Gale and Lewis Chandler

Vote on seats for vacated interests - Lewis Chandler and Lara Gale have resigned, leaving vacant seats in the Bear Lake and Water Dependent Habitat and Environment seats

Christie Hansen entertains the motion for Mark Scadden to fill the seat vacated by Lewis Chandler for the Bear Lake interest

Motion made by Ann Neville

Motion seconded by Trevor Nielson

Motion Unanimously approved

Nominations for seat to be filled left by Lara

Council discussed and decided to take some time to think about who we should reach out to fill the interest left by Lara. She did work for BRAG, so maybe somebody else from that organization could be contacted.

Motion made to close nominations for this seat made by Carl Mackley

Seconded by Kurt Lindley

Motion Unanimously approved

Vote on BRWC Secretary Position

Secretary position was left open with the resignation of Lara Gale

Any volunteers or nominations to fill the secretary position

With no volunteers or nominations, the council decided to table for now and place on next meeting's agenda

Motion made by Trevor Nielson

Seconded by Kurt Lindley

Motion Unanimously accepted

Decide upon a venue and date for a BRWC field trip

- We have been encouraged to schedule some site visits to get out on the ground and see the resource up close. Any ideas?
 - Ag is under a lot of pressure with the recent GSL panic
 - Is there any Agricultural site that would show us/provide us better information to better understand their pressures or needs? Or that would be helpful for us to physically see?
 - Bear River Canal Company regularly gives out tours
 - Members of this council are welcome to attend these tours – reach out to Trevor Nielson

- They are doing tours on October 20th and October 27th
 - Could wait until Spring to do a tour – might be able to see more and would definitely be more comfortable (not freezing cold)
 - Does Farm Bureau have recommendations for any farms that have incorporated ag optimization that we could visit?
- Kurt Lindley runs Hyrum Dam – would we be able to visit there?
- Could piggybank onto yearly tour that Cache Water District does
- Utah board of water resources is planning a tour of Bear Lake on October 4th – we could join that tour as well
- Upper area – bearriverbasin.org has a lot of information available
 - Burdette could also help arrange a visit to the upper areas
- Cutler Dam? – hard to get vehicles into the area, would require ½ mile walk but we could visit that area – Bear River Commission recently had a tour through this area and we can replicate at least part of that
 - Unofficial vote on how to proceed
 - Participating in already scheduled tours
 - This received more support from council members
 - Creating our own tour or site visit
 - Motion made to table official site visit to next meeting
 - Motion made by Carl Mackley
 - Steve Griffin seconded
 - Unanimously accepted

What do we want to get communicated to the UWC by Nate Daug's?

- Secretary funding

Optional Discussion

Next Utah Watersheds Council meeting: October 12th, 1 to 3pm

Meeting is held in-person at DNR building (1594 W North Temple St, Salt Lake City, UT 84116)

Meeting can also be viewed at their website here: [Utah Watersheds Council – Utah Division of Water Resources](#)

Conclusion

Schedule Next BRWC Meeting

Next Bear River Watershed Council Meeting: December 6th at 2 pm at BRWCD

Jeannie Simmonds made motion

Carl Mackley seconded motion

Unanimously accepted

Ann will send out survey questions. Please fill out these questions before the next meeting.

Trevor Nielson to report on upcoming bills at next meeting

Motion to adjourn – Ann Neville

September 21, 2023

Bear River Water Conservancy District