

## Kanab Creek/Virgin River Watershed Council Organizing Meeting

### Attendees:

Dave Jessop – Virgin River Commissioner	Brock Belnap – WCWCD
Mindy Mees – WCWCD	Candace Schaible – DWRe
Mike Noel – Kane County Water District	Dan Adams – Langdon Group
Scott Taylor – St. George City (Water Services Director)	Leila Ahmadi – DWRe
Leslie Fonger – Washington County	Elaine York – The Nature Conservancy
Jeff Bradybaugh – Zion National Park	Tom Marston – USGS
Steve Meisner – Virgin River Program	Zach Renstrom – WCWCD
Mac Hall – Hurricane Canal Company	Hollie Wood – Langdon Group
Stacy Young – Southern Utah Home Builders Association	Carly Payne – DWRe

### Information and Announcements:

- Reminder about the watershed councils breakfast meet-and-greet on **March 20, 2024, at 7:30 am**
  - Planned in conjunction with the annual Utah Water Users Association Conference, though you do not need to be attending the conference to attend the meet-and-greet
  - Please RSVP if you plan to attend
    - Link: [RSVP for Watershed Councils Breakfast Meet and Greet \(google.com\)](#)

### Approval of Documents:

- Motion made to accept organizing documents with the change of “Niv” typo to “Nov” as organizing month at head of document
  - Motion made by Scott Taylor
  - Seconded by Mac Hall
    - Motion unanimously approved

### Virgin River Presentation:

#### Virgin River

- Dave Jessop showed the different drainages, storage, and over-all flow of the Virgin River on Google Earth
- Quail Creek diversion located within city of Virgin
  - Large steel gates, hydraulically driven that gives ability to control when/how much water is channeled out
- Hurricane canal, La Verkin diversion, tunnel through the mountain -> all part of the effort to get water into the area
- 1985 – first portion of the pipeline completed; early 1990s was when the southern portion of the pipeline was constructed

- Small hydroelectric power plant – 500 to 600 kilowatts; water returned to the river at this area and cools the river to benefit fish
- 2300-kilowatt hydro plant further downstream
- Sand Hollow has lift station to help fill the Sand Hollow reservoir
- 3 hydro plants by Gunlock – owned by PacifiCorp – Gunlock Reservoir is currently spilling
- Water gets to Newcastle reservoir via tunnel through the mountain
- Irrigation supplied to Santa Clara (municipalities and irrigation companies) and the Shivwits band of the Paiutes also get their water through a nearby pipeline
- It is not required to have a formal relationship with neighboring states regarding water issues, even though we are very close to the state's edge
  - WCWCD works with nearby water conservancy districts in Nevada fairly frequently
- Water treatment plant completed in the 1980s – now working to get it expanded yet again – critical infrastructure for water for the entire area
- Reservoir leaks and the water is lost to the county, which is why Toquerville is getting updated infrastructure
- Warner Valley reservoir – Washington Diversion Dam – currently delivers secondary water to St. George and Washington – will create a pond and pump up
  - Where there is currently a recreation spot, that will be where the dam will go
  - Timeline is currently uncertain, but is a ways out within the master plan
- All water comes from either groundwater or surface water of Virgin River
- High volatility between years on water availability
  - High water year 2023 has kept reservoirs full even to now
  - There have been a few years when no replenishment water is received in our reservoirs
  - Monsoon variability also contributes to this
- What information could be shared with others to help them become better watershed partners?
  - This is the most complex water system in the state of Utah
    - There are a few key spots we often take people to help show what we work with
    - Variability also contributes to the complexity involved maybe even more so here than other areas in the state
    - 2 endangered fish species, 1 endangered bird species, and a listed lizard species and many other species that are close to being listed that we are trying to keep off the endangered list
    - Variability in amount of sediment within the water/river
  - Overall municipal water use has stayed consistent or decreased even though growth in the area has greatly increased
    - Home builders' association is helping encourage new builds to be less water-dependent and use more native or xeriscape type landscapes
- Who does all the education regarding these issues in the area?
  - Washington County Water Conservation District
  - Local municipalities

- Often municipalities will direct education efforts towards/through the conservancy district so that the message is always the same and because they have funding available for conservation efforts
- Candace Schaible works with the landscape incentive program for the state
  - Washington county has done a great job of removing grass

#### Virgin River Program

- Created in 2002 as a result of the Virgin River Management Plan
- Virgin River Resource Management Program
- 2 goals:
  - Protect native species and their habitat
  - ensure recreational and consumptive needs required for growing human needs
- Work in coordination with projects and groups to try and help meet both needs
  - Cooperative partnership between local, state, federal, and private entities
    - Includes: Water Conservancy District, State of Utah, Dixie Conservation District, TNC, Shivwits band, and others
- Work to recover fish and bird populations while still maintaining water availability for human needs in the area
- Virgin River Program does an educational outreach with local students talking about the river and the wildlife to k-12 students in the school district

#### Other:

- The most basic activity that other successful watershed councils have done are local field tours or trips that can illustrate/teach important info on the ground
  - A few ideas of places to visit to learn more within the council itself
    - Hot Springs
    - Quail Diversion Dam
    - Washington Fields Diversion
  - Are there other places where the council can visit to help determine if this is a good place to try and expand broader outreach – with municipalities or students or other important groups?
- If there are important things that you want the rest of the state to be able to see or learn about (GSL receives a lot of attention, but the things that are going on here are also important and could get broader understanding) – work with Carly and the Division to help spread the info through social media or to spread that info up to the legislature
- Reuse is what keeps us growing in this area, but it is not as highly used across the Wasatch Front – concerns with legislation creating state-wide mandates or enforcing no reuse throughout the state would be detrimental to this area
  - Tour of ReUse Plant
- Could do a loop of Toquerville Reservoir, Diversion, Hot Springs, Washington Fields Diversion and other hot spots that would be really beneficial for the council to see – may need a 2-to-3-hour block

- Could do a different day for the west side and the reuse plant and the Gunlock and Ivins area

**Consider Approval of November 1, 2023, Minutes:**

- Motion made to accept the minutes from the November 1<sup>st</sup> meeting
  - Mac Hall made motion
  - Motion seconded by Scott Taylor
    - Motion unanimously approved

**Public Comments:**

- No public comments

**Next Meeting:**

- May 22<sup>nd</sup> 9 am to noon field tour
  - Start at Washington County Water Conservancy District, do the loop, and come back for lunch at the district afterwards