



## **Kanab Creek/Virgin River Watershed Council Meeting**

**Thursday January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**Washington County Water Conservancy District**

**12:00 pm – 1:00 pm**

### Attendees:

Dave Jessop – Virgin River Commissioner

Carly Payne - DWRe

Mindy Mees – WCWCD

Candace Schaible – DWRe

Mike Noel – Kane County Water District

Zach Renstrom - WCWCD

Leila Ahmadi – DWRe

Leslie Fonger – Washington County

Elaine York – The Nature Conservancy

Ed Bowler - WCWCD

Mac Hall – Hurricane Canal Company

Steve Meisner – Virgin River Program

Scott Taylor – St. George City (Water Services  
Director)

Brie Thompson - WCWCD

Jane Wahlen – Conserve Southwest Utah

### **Welcome**

Dave Jessop welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **Presentation on Regional Reuse Purification System**

Reuse Program Manager Morgan Drake with Washington County Water Conservancy District gave a presentation on the District's Regional Reuse Purification Reuse System.

The District's "One Water Washington County" initiative. The initiative aims to maximize water use at every stage of the water lifecycle, ensuring sustainable water management across the county.

The initiative consists of five key strategies:

1. **Conservation** - Reducing water consumption through measures like turf grass restrictions in commercial, institutional, and residential areas, alongside a buyback program.

2. **Reuse** - Expanding water reuse programs, with a focus on producing potable reuse water. St. George City has led the charge in non-potable reuse for 20 years, using reclaimed water for irrigation, freeing up potable water sources.
3. **Local Supply Development** - Expanding and optimizing the county's limited water supplies, particularly from the Virgin River Basin, which is drought-prone and fully appropriated.
4. **Agricultural Conversion** - Transitioning agricultural water rights to municipal and industrial uses as the community grows.
5. **Groundwater Optimization** - Collaborating with municipal partners to maximize existing groundwater resources without depleting aquifers.

The District's 20-year plan places a strong emphasis on conservation (a quarter of the plan) and reuse (half of the plan), given the limited availability of local water supplies. The plan aims to roll out an expanded reuse program starting in 2026, with a fully operational reuse program by 2030.

**The Reuse Purification System** will produce 24,000 acre-feet of water annually, contributing significantly to the county's water supply. The system's phases include:

1. **Phase 1:** Expanding the use of Type 1 reuse water, which is safe for human contact but not for consumption. This water will be stored in reservoirs and used for irrigation, allowing potable water sources like the Virgin River to be repurposed for drinking water.
2. **Phase 2:** Implementing advanced water purification to make the Type 1 water safe for drinking. The purified water will be stored in drinking water reservoirs and returned to the treatment system.

Infrastructure improvements will involve:

- New water reclamation facilities (three new or expanded facilities).
- A new advanced water purification facility and a demonstration facility.
- The construction of 60 miles of pipeline to connect the regional systems and allow for agricultural water exchanges and potable reuse.

The project is a significant and expensive endeavor, estimated at over a billion dollars, and it aims to provide crucial water resources for a relatively small community. Funding support includes \$250 million through state loans, reclamation, and ARPA funds, with ongoing efforts to secure additional funding.

In summary, the District is focused on creating a sustainable, drought-resilient water supply by expanding reuse initiatives and improving the infrastructure needed to recycle water for drinking and irrigation. This project reflects a long-term commitment to water management in Washington County.

### **Discussion on Watershed Management Plan**

Dave Jessop explained there was a discussion at the last meeting about reviewing the 2006 Watershed plan. Jane Wahlen brought up the topic of reviewing, indicating interest in revisiting the 2006 plan. Scott Taylor pointed out that the issues in the Virgin River watershed are likely the same as they were 18 years ago. Zach Renstrom agreed with Scott and suggested it would be useful to review the plan.

Mr. Renstrom commented that he looked at the plan and does not think there would be a lot of changes, but in regard to funding he talked with the state and there is no money available to fund and is not sure where the money would come from.

Steve Meismer commented that he talked with Corey Cram because he was involved in this, and the cost was around \$150,000 to \$175,000 in 2006, the cost would be significantly more around \$200,000.

Mr. Renstrom asked Elaine York if she has any ideas of possible funding for this. Elaine responded that the Nature Conservancy does not have a lot of money, and they raise funds once they identify a project. Ms. York said she would look into it.

Dave Jessop mention is the last meeting is was mentioned that we might be able to apply for a grant with the BLM, Steve responded that the BLM is not taking any grant applications.

#### **Other**

No other business was discussed.

#### **Consider approval of September 19, 2024 minutes**

***Zach Renstrom made a motion to approve September 19, 2024 minutes, the motion was seconded by Leslie Fonger, all voted aye.***

#### **Next meeting**

Next meeting will be in May, Steve Meismer suggest a field trip to go look at some fish and birds. He will get it set up with the Division of Wildlife. We can also look into other issues that we are dealing with like the erosion along the Virgin River.

Carly Payne said that the Division of Water Resources just hired the state water planner Stephanie McGinnis, and in legislation the watershed councils are to contribute in that. Ms. McGinnis is hoping to get on the watershed council spring agenda. Ms. Payne asked if that was something we can combine with the tour. Mr. Jessop commented that it would not be a problem. For the May meeting we will meet at the District's office then leave for the field trip.

Zach Renstrom gave an update on the SNOTEL site.

Kolob gauge the data for this year, represented by the black line on the graph, shows that current snowpack levels are not the worst they have ever been, but they are not ideal either. There has been a significant lack of precipitation over the past several months. The 5-to-10-day forecast does not show significant improvement in precipitation levels.

Mr. Renstrom commented that he spoke with Ron Thompson about the situation. Ron reassured him that there will likely be good storms in March, which could help improve conditions.

The meeting was adjourned upon motion.

*Mindy Mees*

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Secretary