

Utah Department of Environmental Quality Press Releases

For the Year 2003

Contents

Acting Director Named for DEQ Division of Radiation Control
Air Quality Wood-Burn Season Ends
Air Sample Results Indicate Fuel As Possible Source of Odor
Chemical Releases to Environment on Downward Trend
DEQ Division Director Appointed
DEQ Deputy Director to Retire
DEQ Division Director Appointed
DEQ Employee Named Utah "Manager of the Year"
DEQ Division Director Retires; Acting Director Named
DEQ Issues Smoke Health Advisory
DEQ IT Director Appointed
Earthquake May Have Impacted Drinking Water Sources
New DEQ Deputy Director Named
Ozone Levels Increasing
Public Comment Period Extended for Southwest Jordan Valley Ground Water
Cleanup Project
Public Comment Sought for South Valley Ground Water Cleanup Project
"Red Light - Green Light" Air Quality Program Begins Saturday
Storm Water Permitting System Now Online Landowners, Contractors to Benefit
from Streamlined Process
Summer Ozone Season Begins Sunday
Utah Celebrates 50 Years of Clean Water
Utah Moves Another Step Closer to Cleaner Air Gov. Walker Signs First State-
approved Regional Haze Plan
Utah Proposes Changes in Water Quality Standards
Utah's Regional Haze Plan Ready for Review
Water Quality Manager Announces Retirement
Water Quality Manager to Leave Post
Water Quality of Ashley Creek Improving

DEQ Division Director Retires; Acting Director Named

January 6, 2003

Contact:

Dianne Nielson, DEQ Executive Director, (801) 536-4402

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - Kent P. Gray has retired as the director of the Division of Environmental Response and Remediation in the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Brad Johnson, the division's Superfund Branch Manager, has been named acting division director until Gray's replacement is selected.

"Utah is cleaner because of Kent Gray's work," said DEQ Executive Director Dianne Nielson. "Thousands of underground storage tanks and contaminated sites have been cleaned up under his leadership, and his expertise has shaped the state's Superfund work with EPA. The environment and the citizens of Utah have benefited from his commitment."

Gray worked for nearly 32 years for the State of Utah in both DEQ and the Department of Health. He became the director of the Division of Environmental Response and Remediation when DEQ became a department in 1992.

As the director, Gray oversaw the development and implementation of waste cleanup programs and the coordination of environmental emergency response. He also served as the executive secretary regarding underground storage tanks to the Solid and Hazardous Waste Control Board. He was instrumental in developing many of Utah's hazardous waste and cleanup programs, including the Voluntary Cleanup Program.

Additionally, Gray chaired of the Underground Storage Tank Advisory Task Force and co-chaired the state Emergency Response Commission. His involvement in the Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials positively influenced state and federal policies regarding Superfund, underground storage tanks and solid and hazardous waste.

"I'm pleased to have had the opportunity to work for state government," Gray said. "I'm proud of the great work my staff has done in cleaning up soil and ground water at thousands of contaminated sites. The division has made significant progress in improving the environment and protecting public health."

Gray also recognized his wife, Kathryn, and sons, David and Trever, for their support. He looks forward to spending more time with his family.

Storm Water Permitting System Now Online Landowners, Contractors to Benefit from Streamlined Process

January 13, 2003

Contacts:

Don Ostler, Division of Water Quality Director, (801) 538-6146

Fred Pehrson, Division of Water Quality Permitting Manager, (801) 538-6076

(Salt Lake City, Utah) -- Utah has become one of the first states in the nation to launch an online application process for the storm water construction permit. The new process is another step in Gov. Mike Leavitt's vision of conducting State business electronically.

The online system allows the operator of a small or large construction activity to apply and pay for permit coverage online. The application takes about 20 minutes to complete. Permit coverage is then issued on the spot.

"The online application offers a quick and convenient way to get a permit," said Division of Water Quality Director Don Ostler. "A lengthy plan review process is not required prior to permit issuance." Because the electronic process is more efficient, it also saves State resources.

A landowner or primary contractor who plans a construction activity that will disturb one or more acres of land is required to obtain a permit. The application requirement may be waived for a small site if construction is occurring within a Phase I or Phase II municipal area. The permit may also be waived for a small sites if construction will be started and finished - meaning paving, re-vegetating, or placing similar erosion controls in place - between January 1 and April 30 of the same calendar year.

Whether an actual permit is needed or conditions warrant one of the two waivers, "good housekeeping" practices are still required during construction, according to Ostler. State rules require everyone to plan and then control storm water sediment and erosion to the maximum extent practical.

Utah's requirements are based on EPA regulations designed to control municipal and industrial storm water and to reduce the amount of pollutants entering rivers, lakes and streams. Phase I requirements targeted construction activities on five acres of land or

more and went into effect in 1992. Phase II requirements followed in 2001, targeting smaller projects involving one to five acres of land.

The permit application is can be found online at <http://www.waterquality.utah.gov/updes/stormwater.htm> The site includes a question-and-answer fact sheet and contacts for those who would like more information or who may need assistance.

Air Sample Results Indicate Fuel As Possible Source of Odor

January 17, 2003

Contact:

Laura Vernon, DEQ Public Information Officer, (801) 536-4484

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - The Utah Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) today received results from air samples taken near the airport of a sporadic odor that has caused some people in the area to become ill.

Results indicate vapors consistent with a petroleum-based product or fuel. However, DEQ has not yet been able to determine the source of the vapors. Natural gas was not detected and has therefore been ruled out.

"Determining a source of the vapors has been difficult because the wind has been coming from different directions during several of the reported episodes, making it hard to back track the source of the smell," said Air Quality Division Director Rick Sprott. "It is possible there could be more than one source."

The concentration of these vapors is well below protective health standards and does not pose an immediate health threat. However, vapors concentrated inside a building have been high enough to cause reports of illness.

"This information will help us as we try to find the source," said Brad Johnson, acting director of the Division of Environmental Response and Remediation.

DEQ encourages people near the airport to notify DEQ at (801) 536-4123 if the odor reappears. Information that would help in DEQ's investigation would be the exact time and place the smell occurred; the general direction of wind; whether you smelled it indoors, outdoors or both; and the characterization of the smell. For example, does it smell like gasoline, jet fuel exhaust fumes, rotten eggs or something sweet or fruity.

Air Quality Wood-Burn Season Ends

February 28, 2003

Contacts:

Rick Sprott, Director, Division of Air Quality, (801) 536-4000

Bob Dalley, Manager, Air Monitoring Center, (801) 887-0760

The Utah Department of Environmental Quality announces the end of this season's "Red Light, Green Light" air quality program, which curtails wood burning along the Wasatch Front during winter inversions.

During the four-month season, which began Nov. 1, 2002, the Division of Air Quality called 2 "red" days and 5 "yellow" days in Salt Lake and Davis counties. Both Utah County and Weber County had all "green" days.

Furthermore, in January 2003, the Bear River Health Department implemented a mandatory wood-burn program for Cache County as a measure to improve air quality. The local health department called 1 "red" and 1 "yellow" day in Cache County.

"The lack of inversions, coupled with reduced pollution in recent years, resulted in improved air quality this winter," Air Quality Director Rick Sprott said. "Utahns and industry have been doing a great job at reducing pollution along the Wasatch Front."

Wood-burning conditions are identified as "Red, Yellow, Green" - similar to traffic lights. The program is used to notify citizens when they can burn wood in a fireplace, depending upon pollution levels. "Red" means burning is prohibited and people are asked to reduce vehicle trips, use mass transit and conserve energy. Likewise, industries are asked to minimize their release of air pollutants and ensure that air pollution control equipment is functioning properly. "Yellow" means a voluntary no burn, and "green" means burning is allowed.

Particulate matter (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀) is the primary winter pollutant. Wood burning produces soot and dust that are components of particulate, as are emissions from vehicles and other engines. Fine particles can become lodged in delicate lung tissue, decreasing lung function, especially for people with respiratory and cardiovascular ailments.

Water Quality Manager Announces Retirement

Cites more public involvement in environmental issues as a significant change

March 27, 2003

Contacts:

Jay Pitkin, Manager of Engineering and Water Quality Management Branch,
Division of Water Quality, (801) 538-6146

Don Ostler, Director of Division of Water Quality, (801) 538-6146

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - After 30 years of service in state government, Water Quality Manager and Professional Engineer Jay Pitkin has announced his retirement, effective March 31, 2003.

According to Pitkin, much has changed during the past 30 years. In addition to expected changes in engineering and water quality improvements, Pitkin said he has also seen significant changes in the public's perception of environmental issues.

"When I started working as an environmental engineer, I noticed that environmental issues weren't high on people's priority list. They didn't think about it back then. Today, there is far more interest, far more awareness and far more public involvement," Pitkin said.

Much of that change can be attributed to Pitkin, said Division of Water Quality Director Don Ostler. A hallmark of his career has been his ability to work well with the public, the regulated community, his staff and his colleagues locally and nationally, according to Ostler.

"Jay has always maintained himself in a highly professional manner while managing the issues we deal with in water quality," Ostler said. "He's been an example of someone who is technically well qualified and who embodies excellent judgment in making decisions."

Pitkin said that he has been fortunate to work with good people who are professional and who want to do the right thing for the environment and public health. "We've been successful in the face of many challenges because of our commitment to environmental protection and the citizens of the state."

Highly respected for his professionalism and engineering skills, Pitkin has played a critical role in making policy and taking action to improve the quality of water in Utah. His legacy includes developing water quality standards that are reasonable, protective and

understandable; helping to pass a requirement that operators of sewage treatment plants be certified; and developing wastewater reuse regulations.

Pitkin has served in a number of leadership positions throughout his career. For the past 20 years, he has been chairman of the Jordanelle/Deer Creek Technical Advisory Committee, which works to improve the water quality of Deer Creek and preserve the high water quality of Jordanelle. In 1981, Pitkin served as the president of the Water Environment Association of Utah and afterward as the local association liaison to the national Water Environment Federation for three years. Since 1987, he has held an appointment by the governor to be one of two Utah representatives to the Colorado River Salinity Control Forum. As a member of this group, he has worked on projects to reduce salinity (salt) in the Colorado River Basin to benefit water users in Utah, Arizona, California and Mexico.

Originally from Logan, Utah, Pitkin earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering in 1967 and a master's degree in environmental engineering in 1968 from Utah State University. He worked as an engineer in California and Oregon before signing on with the State of Utah in 1973 as a public health engineer in the area of water quality. In 1977, Pitkin became an assistant to the state water quality director. In 1987, he was promoted to manager of the Engineering and Water Quality Management Branch.

Water Quality of Ashley Creek Improving

March 28, 2003

Contacts:

Don Ostler, Director, Division of Water Quality, (801) 538-6146

Carl Adams, Environmental Scientist, Division of Water Quality, (801) 538-9215

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - According to a recent water quality study, Ashley Creek in Uintah County is well on its way toward meeting Utah's water quality standards. Closure of the old sewage lagoons on the east side of the creek and subsequent construction of a new wastewater treatment plant have reduced pollution problems associated with selenium and salt that have plagued the creek for more than a decade.

The water quality study investigated all of the sources of selenium and salt and determined how much these sources would need to be reduced in order to meet Utah's water quality standards. According to the study, the necessary pollution reductions have been taken care of with the closure of the old sewage lagoons on the east side of Ashley Creek.

The sewage lagoons were constructed in 1981 to dispose of Ashley Valley's wastewater. Soon afterward, the lagoons began to suffer chronic leakage problems. As the wastewater seeped down through the soil and rock, it dissolved the selenium and salts contained naturally within the Mancos Shale on which the lagoons were constructed. Eventually the water made its way to Ashley Creek through seeps and springs that appeared along the bluffs east of the creek.

Several federal, state and local agencies - including the Environmental Protection Agency, Bureau of Reclamation, Utah Department of Environmental Quality's Division of Water Quality and the Ashley Valley Sewer Management Board - collaborated to address the pollution problem by providing funding for a new wastewater treatment plant. The plant began operating in May 2001. Since then, the lagoons have gradually dried up, along with the seeps and springs that were contributing so much of the selenium and salt.

Because selenium can be toxic in high concentrations to fish and wildlife and to those who consume them, the Division of Water Quality, Utah Department of Health and TriCounty Health Department issued a fish and waterfowl consumption advisory in 1991 on the lower portion of the Ashley Creek and nearby Stewart Lake. That advisory is still in effect while further study is conducted.

Earthquake May Have Impacted Drinking Water Sources

April 17, 2003

Contacts:

Kevin Brown, Director, Division of Drinking Water, (801) 536-4188
Kim Dyches, Environmental Scientist, Division of Drinking Water, (801) 536-4202

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - The Utah Department of Environmental Quality advises public drinking water system operators and private well owners in the Levan and Nephi areas to check their wells and springs for reduced flows and turbidity changes.

This advisory is being issued as a result of a 4.4 magnitude earthquake that shook those areas of Juab County Wednesday. It applies to public drinking water system operators and private well owners who use ground water as a drinking water source.

"An earthquake can affect springs and wells, which are ground water sources that produce water from fractured bedrock," said Kevin Brown, director of the Utah Division of Drinking Water. "Movement in the rocks can open or close fractures that can affect the flow of water to springs and wells."

Muddy water or a reduction in water flow may indicate a problem with the water source. Public drinking water system operators and private well owners may call the Utah Division of Drinking Water at (801) 536-4200 for technical assistance.

DEQ Deputy Director to Retire

April 25, 2003

Contacts:

Brent Bradford, DEQ Deputy Director, (801) 536-4405
Dianne Nielson, DEQ Executive Director, (801) 536-4402

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - Brent Bradford, a 31-year veteran of state environmental programs, is stepping down as the deputy director of the Utah Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). He retires April 30.

Known for his credibility and ability to compromise, Bradford influenced public policy that resulted in a cleaner environment and better protection of public health. His work with the Utah State Legislature and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency provided Utah with resources to effectively manage environmental programs according to the state's needs. Notably, he helped draft legislation to create the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, a move that expedited the resolution of many environmental issues facing the state and positioned Utah as a visible player in influencing state and national environmental policies.

"During my career, I've learned what it means to be in public service," Bradford said. "We exist to serve a need and to serve people. Utah's environment is in much better condition today than it was 30 years ago thanks to growth, recognition and support of environmental programs locally and nationally."

Bradford leaves a legacy of robust environmental programs and policies. He developed Utah's hazardous and radioactive waste policies to better manage those wastes in the state. He wrote Utah's first air pollution reduction plans, which have resulted in cleaner, healthier air. He implemented automobile emissions inspections to reduce air pollution, underground storage tank inspections to detect and cleanup contamination, and used oil and used tire recycling programs to prevent pollution to the environment.

"Brent deserves our thanks and recognition," said DEQ Executive Director Dianne Nielson. "His leadership and commitment to workable environmental regulation makes a difference, and that is reflected in the quality of our environment."

Bradford's influence stretched beyond Utah's borders. He served in a number of leadership positions with the Environmental Council of States, notably in the area of environmental information management and data exchange among states and federal agencies. This work resulted in a major reform of how environmental information is more accurately managed and more easily accessed.

Bradford began his career in state government in 1972 as an environmental health specialist. He went on to serve as assistant director and director of the Bureau of Air Quality, as the director of the Bureau of Solid and Hazardous Waste and as deputy director of the Division of Environmental Health within the Utah Department of Health. He was named deputy director of DEQ in 1991 when the department was created.

Prior to his service with the State of Utah, Bradford was the Chief of Special Foreign Activities for the U.S. Army at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Medical Research. He earned a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Utah and completed coursework in the Master of Public Administration program. He is also a graduate of basic and advance officer courses from the U.S. Army Medical Department.

DEQ Division Director Appointed

April 29, 2003

Contacts:

Dianne Nielson, DEQ Executive Director, (801) 536-4402

Brad Johnson, ERR Division Director, (801) 536-4170

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - Utah Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Executive Director Dianne Nielson has appointed Brad Johnson as the director of the Utah Division of Environmental Response and Remediation. Johnson has been serving as interim division director since January 2003 when then-director Kent P. Gray retired.

"Brad is the right person to step into this job," Nielson said. "He has provided superb leadership to a staff that has accomplished great work. And just as important, he is committed to doing the right thing for the environment and improving Utah's quality of life."

As division director, Johnson will oversee the inspection and clean up of underground storage tank sites, the Voluntary Cleanup Program, Superfund, environmental emergency response, and Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know reports. Johnson will also lend his expertise to state and national groups working through hazardous waste issues.

"I'm excited for the opportunity to be part of DEQ's senior management team and look forward to building on our successes," Johnson said.

Johnson began his work with DEQ as an environmental scientist 20 years ago. For the past 15 years, he has managed the state's work with EPA to clean up Utah's most hazardous waste sites under the Superfund program. He graduated from Brigham Young University with two degrees in geology, a bachelor's in 1981 and a master's in 1983.

Water Quality Manager to Leave Post

May 27, 2003

Contacts:

Fred Pehrson, Permitting, Compliance and Monitoring Branch Manager, Utah Division of Water Quality, (801) 538-6076

Don Ostler, Director, Utah Division of Water Quality, (801) 538-6146

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - Utah's water quality permitting, compliance and monitoring manager announces his retirement after 30 years of public service with the State of Utah. Fred Pehrson will leave his post at the DEQ Division of Water Quality May 30, 2003.

In 30 years as a water quality engineer and manager, Pehrson has been able to provide better environmental and public health protection by fostering cooperative working relationships with industry, municipalities, agriculture and other regulated facilities.

"While we walk a fine line as a regulatory agency, we've been able to accomplish a great deal through collaboration and partnerships," Pehrson said. "The regulated community has now accepted a much more responsible role in protecting water quality than in the past."

Water quality programs have expanded dramatically during his 30-year career. For example, Pehrson said he has seen the number of regulated facilities increase tenfold, from approximately 200 to more than 2,000.

"At the beginning of my career, we regulated mostly industrial and municipal facilities," he said. "Now we regulate storm water pollution, animal feed lots and sewage sludge. The public has enjoyed a better environment because of these additional regulatory programs."

At a critical point in the 1980s when states recognized the benefit of local control of federal regulatory programs, Pehrson helped Utah successfully receive primacy of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System program from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to regulate wastewater discharges to Utah's rivers, streams, lakes and reservoirs. He also played a key role in helping Utah to become the first state in the country to receive local control of the federal program that regulates treatment and beneficial use of municipal sewage sludge, also known as biosolids.

Furthermore, Pehrson led Utah's effort to receive primacy of the federal Underground Injection Control Program that protects ground water. He served as a multi-state representative on the Board of Directors of the National Ground Water Protection Council that developed national policies regarding protection of ground water.

"We owe a debt of gratitude to Fred for his outstanding work ethic and commitment to cooperation," said Division of Water Quality Director Don Ostler. "We all enjoy a higher quality of life because of the progress Utah has made under his leadership. His influence will be felt for years to come."

Pehrson graduated from the University of Utah in 1973 with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and in 1975 with a master's degree in environmental engineering. He became an assistant to the water quality division director in 1988 in charge of permitting, compliance and monitoring. Pehrson is a licensed professional engineer.

Utah Proposes Changes in Water Quality Standards

May 29, 2003

Contacts:

William Moellmer, Environmental Scientist, Utah Division of Water Quality,
(801) 538-6329

Don Ostler, Director, Utah Division of Water Quality, (801) 538-6146

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - The Utah Division of Water Quality is proposing changes in the state's water quality standards that could affect how much pollution sewage treatment plants are allowed to discharge into Utah's rivers, streams, lakes or reservoirs.

Two changes in particular could increase or decrease the costs of treating wastewater and the amount the public pays for their sewer service. Under the proposed changes, environmental protection of the state's high quality of water would remain intact.

The proposal calls for a change in permitted levels of ammonia discharged into the waters of the state. This change may relax permit limit requirements for ammonia, reducing financial requirements to many wastewater treatment plants. This proposal is based upon new EPA research on the toxicity effects of ammonia.

The proposal also adds a new review process for all discharges to any river, stream, lake or reservoir in the state to prevent degradation of water quality. This process may require additional alternative treatment options and a higher level of treatment as well as encourage pollution trading. These alternative options may cause additional costs of treatment for specifically targeted waters, such as drinking water sources or high-quality blue ribbon fisheries.

"These major changes may have a financial impact for both the municipal wastewater districts and private industry but without compromising the environment," said Division of Water Quality environmental scientist William Moellmer.

A public hearing is scheduled to receive public input prior to adoption of these changes by the Water Quality Board. The hearing will be June 6, 2003 at 10 a.m. at the Cannon Building, Room 125, 288 N. 1460 West, Salt Lake City.

Written comments will be accepted until 5 p.m. June 15, 2003. Statements should be addressed to William Moellmer, Utah Division of Water Quality, P.O. Box 144870, Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4870. Comments may also be faxed to (801) 538-6016. The proposed changes are available on the Web at www.waterquality.utah.gov and also at the Division of Water Quality, 288 N. 1460 West, Salt Lake City, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Summer Ozone Season Begins Sunday

May 30, 2003

Contacts:

Cheryl Heying, Manager, Division of Air Quality, (801) 536-4015
Laura Vernon, UDEQ Public Information Officer, (801) 536-4484

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - It's hot. Summer has arrived early along the Wasatch Front, and as the temperatures increase so do the ozone levels. Beginning June 1 through Sept. 30, Salt Lake, Davis, Weber and Utah county residents are asked to "Choose Clean Air" in an effort to reduce ozone, an invisible gas formed when emissions from automobiles, industry and other sources react to bright sunshine and high temperatures. It is a major health and environmental concern in Utah's most urban counties during the summer.

As such, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is asking residents to participate in voluntary “no-drive days” when exceptionally high ozone concentrations are forecast. To help residents know what other actions they can take, especially if they can’t get out of their vehicles, DEQ has a “Clean Air Utah” Web site at www.cleanair.utah.gov. By visiting the Web site, people can develop a daily plan of action, personalized to their needs, that includes steps they can take at home and at work as well as ways to drive less and drive smarter.

For example, residents can help keep pollution levels down by carpooling or taking the bus or TRAX, walking to lunch, filling the gas tank or mowing the lawn in the evening, avoiding use of gasoline-powered engines on polluted days, delaying errands and consolidating trips.

“By taking daily action, people can make a difference all summer long and especially during exceptionally hot, sunny days when ozone levels are at their worst,” said Rick Sprott, director of the Division of Air Quality.

Residents are also encouraged to watch out for signs that pollution levels are increasing and to be extra vigilant at doing their part to keep pollution levels at a minimum.

“The brown haze you see hovering over the valley is a mix of pollutants needed to make ozone,” Sprott said. “That haze coupled with temperatures at or above 95 degrees and calm winds is a perfect recipe for ozone - and the perfect time to leave the car parked.”

The highest concentrations of ozone usually occur between 2 and 8 p.m. Therefore, it is particularly important for people to stay out of their vehicles as much as possible and incorporate other actions that reduce pollution such as conserving energy.

According to Sprott, any exposure to ozone can be harmful. Continued exposure to ozone can cause breathing problems, reduce lung function, irritate eyes and nasal passages and reduce resistance to colds and other infections. Some people are more at risk of health impacts than others. Those most at risk are children who are active outdoors, adults who work or exercise vigorously outdoors and people with respiratory diseases such as asthma or emphysema. At-risk people can reduce their exposure to ozone by spending less time participating in vigorous outdoor activities, taking it a little easier when outside and exercising in the morning or later in the evening.

For the latest air pollution information, residents are encouraged to call the Air Pollution Hotline at 975-4009 in Salt Lake and Davis counties or (800) 228-5434 in Utah and Weber counties, or visit the “Clean Air Utah” Web site at www.cleanair.utah.gov. Information on air quality is updated at least twice a day - once in the morning and again in the afternoon.

Utah Celebrates 50 Years of Clean Water

June 13, 2003

Contact:

Don Ostler, Utah Division of Water Quality Director, (801) 538-6146

Utah Celebrates 50 Years of Clean Water

(Salt Lake City, Utah) – Utah enjoys cleaner water today due in large part to the efforts of individuals who have served as members of the Utah Water Quality Board since its first meeting 50 years ago. The Board today celebrates 50 years of water quality achievements and honors those who have voluntarily served Utah citizens to provide an abundance of clean, healthy water for drinking, fishing, recreating, irrigating and other uses.

Following passage of Utah’s first water quality protection act, the Utah Water Quality Board first met on June 2, 1953 in the State Capitol Building. They began immediately to classify all streams and lakes according to beneficial uses and to establish water quality standards to protect them. They also established requirements for treatment of waste discharges from municipalities and industries.

These actions set in motion a partnership with communities all over the state to fund modern wastewater treatment plants to protect public health and the environment. Their legacy is our quality of life.

“The Utah Water Quality Board has accomplished a tremendous amount of work and has done so with the understanding that there is a fundamental connection between water quality and life quality,” said Don Ostler, director of the DEQ Division of Water Quality.

For example, when the Board was first formed 50 years ago, there was practically no sewage treatment provided by communities. Raw sewage was discharged directly into our streams, rivers and lakes, polluting the environment and causing a health hazard. Now modern wastewater treatment plants that meet public health protection and water quality standards serve all communities in Utah. Utah was one of the first states to achieve national secondary treatment standards.

To achieve this milestone, the Board has worked with communities to provide nearly a billion dollars in funding for construction of wastewater treatment plants.

Likewise, when the Board was formed in 1953, industries and communities discharged into Utah’s waters with very few regulatory requirements for removing pollution.

Today, under the Board’s authority, there are more than 1,200 discharge permits that regulate the amount and type of pollutants that industries and communities can release into the streams, rivers and lakes in compliance with water quality standards.

The steady trend toward water quality improvement can be seen in the percent of waters now meeting water quality standards. Eighteen years ago, only 60 percent of streams, rivers and lakes met standards. Today, approximately 75 percent of those waters meet standards.

“That is a tremendous improvement when you consider rapid population growth and increase in industrial growth, all of which create more pollution,” Ostler said. “Utah is doing a good job at improving and maintaining water quality, but there’s still more work to be done.”

One piece of work facing the Utah Water Quality Board is the development of water quality restoration plans for the 20 percent of waters in the state still impaired due to pollution. The Board also faces the challenge of controlling non-point source pollution, or polluted runoff, that flows directly into waters from storms and irrigation runoff.

“Over the years, the Board has demonstrated leadership and resiliency to make change happen,” Ostler said. “As we look to the future, we see a continuation of our resolve to preserve water quality and maintain public health and our way of life.”

DEQ Employee Named Utah “Manager of the Year”

June 20, 2003

Contact:

Cheryl Heying, Planning Branch Manager, Utah Division of Air Quality, (801) 536-4015

(Salt Lake City, Utah) – The Utah Department of Environmental Quality’s Cheryl Heying has been named Utah “Manager of the Year” by Lt. Governor Olene Walker, the Utah Department of Human Resource Management and the Utah Society of Certified Public Managers. Heying is the planning manager for the DEQ Division of Air Quality.

“It’s very humbling to be given this award and to be recognized by my peers,” Heying said. “There are so many people at DEQ who deserve the same award.”

Heying is known for her ability to listen, build and motivate teams, make decisions, focus on results that make sense for the customer and develop an atmosphere of trust. She is recognized as a leader not only within the department but with outside organizations and communities as well.

“Cheryl is an exceptional leader and a direct and decisive manager,” said Rick Sprott, director of the Division of Air Quality. “She is not afraid to make a decision, but she’s also smart enough to recognize the importance of listening to those who may see something she does not.”

Heying manages a team of 25 environmental scientists and engineers responsible for developing air quality improvement plans and forecasting and managing impacts of future air pollution. Her staff describes her as approachable, supportive and highly motivating. As a result, her staff takes pride in their work and appreciates her ability to work toward solutions that benefit everyone.

“Cheryl has a vision and creates excitement about the work that is contagious,” Sprott said. “She listens, works well with others, sets reasonable timelines and objectives, and then steps up to the plate and makes decisions that support those objectives.”

A hallmark of her award is the work accomplished under her leadership. Heying has directed a number of projects, including a new air quality plan for Utah County, a revised division Web site to be more customer friendly, an awarding-winning “Choose Clean Air” public awareness campaign, simplified report requirements for industry and cohesive partnerships with communities.

“Recognition of Cheryl’s leadership is well-deserved,” said DEQ Executive Director Dianne Nielson. “She is making a difference in environmental partnership and management.”

Chemical Releases to Environment on Downward Trend

June 26, 2003

Contact:

Brad Johnson, Director, Utah Division of Environmental Response and Remediation, (801) 536-4128

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - Chemical releases to Utah's environment decreased 19 percent overall in 2001, according to the Utah Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) 2001 Data Summary compiled by the Utah Department of Environmental Quality. These releases are allowed under various environmental permits as a result of industrial operations.

"We are very encouraged by these decreases," said Brad Johnson, director of the Utah Division of Environmental Response and Remediation. "The volume of waste that is generated annually in Utah appears to be going down."

The most notable decrease is the amount of chemical releases to the air. Utah's releases to the air decreased 60 percent from 48.9 million pounds in 2000 to 19.3 million pounds in 2001. This is the lowest release-to-air total in the 15-year history of the TRI program. The reduction is primarily due to a decrease in chlorine and hydrochloric acid emissions from U.S. Magnesium.

Chemical releases to the land are down 17 percent from 902 million pounds in 2000 to 745 million pounds in 2001. Kennecott Copper facilities reported nearly 98 percent of the release-to-land total in the form of copper, lead, zinc, manganese, chromium, arsenic and other metal compounds, including naturally occurring metals in waste rock, which is removed during mining operations.

Releases to surface water remained virtually constant at 1 million pounds. This total consists almost entirely of nitrate compounds released from Geneva Steel to Utah Lake. Kennecott Copper facilities reported releases of various metals to the Great Salt Lake.

The TRI is an annual report used to inform citizens, industries and government regulators about wastes generated in Utah. Data are gathered at year=s end and compiled the following year. The report may be used to evaluate potential hazards to public health or the environment. TRI data can be used to provide basic information on the types and volumes of waste and emissions at a facility, but the data must be used with other concentration, migration, environmental targets and exposure information to assess a level of human health or environmental risk.

A total of 171 Utah facilities filed TRI reports for 117 TRI-listed chemicals and chemical categories. Approximately 65 percent of these facilities are located in Weber, Davis, Salt Lake and Utah counties.

The TRI report is available on the Utah Department of Environmental Quality's Web site at <http://www.environmentalresponse.utah.gov/cercla/serc/trihome.htm>.

Utah's Regional Haze Plan Ready for Review

June 30, 2003

Contact:

Rick Sprott, Director, Utah Division of Air Quality, (801) 536-4000

The Utah Department of Environmental Quality's Division of Air Quality will hold a series of public meetings statewide to receive feedback on Utah's draft plan to improve and protect visual air quality in the national parks on the Colorado Plateau.

The meeting schedule is as follows:

Tuesday, July 8, 7 p.m.

Provo

Utah County Commission Chamber

100 E. Center St.

Wednesday, July 9, 7 p.m.

Moab

Grand County Commission Chamber

125 E. Center St.

Thursday, July 10, 7 p.m.

Salt Lake City

Utah Department of Environmental Quality

168 N. 1950 West

Room 101

Tuesday, July 15, 7 p.m.

St. George

St. George City Council Chambers

175 E. 200 North

Wednesday, July 16, 7 p.m.

Richfield

Sevier County Auditorium

250 N. Main

Thursday, July 17, 7 p.m.

Logan

Bear River Health Department

655 E. 1300 North

"These meetings are not formal public hearings on the final plan," said Rick Sprott, director of the Utah Division of Air Quality. "Public hearings will be held in October before the plan is adopted by the Utah Air Quality Board. Right now, we want to give the public the opportunity to review the preliminary draft, and we want to hear public opinions about the contents of the plan."

The plan details coordinated strategies Utah will use to reduce human-caused pollutants that contribute to regional haze, mainly particulate matter and certain gases such as sulfur

dioxide. Utah is one of several western states developing plans to improve visibility in national parks. All five of Utah's national parks - Arches, Capitol Reef, Canyonlands, Bryce Canyon and Zions - are located on the Colorado Plateau and experience regional haze.

Specifically, the plan includes an emissions cap that declines through the year 2018. If emissions in the western region exceed that cap, the plan calls for implementation of a trading program that requires large sources of air pollution to hold allowances for a pre-determined amount of emissions; sources that do not hold enough allowances will have to reduce their emissions or buy allowances from another source. This method ensures that reductions will come from the sources whose cost to reduce are the lowest, making it a more economical program than command-and-control regulations.

Other provisions will require consideration of effects on visibility when land managers plan for prescribed fires as well as tracking emissions of pollutants to ensure that the cleanest days remain clean. The plan also documents efforts in Utah to implement energy conservation measures and to increase use of renewable energy sources.

The components of the plan were recommended to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1996 by the Grand Canyon Visibility Transport Commission to protect the visitor's experience at the 16 national parks on the Colorado Plateau. The Commission's vice-chair was Gov. Mike Leavitt. Many Utahns participated in developing the recommendations. EPA wrote those recommendations into the regional haze rule put into effect in 1999.

Much of the technical support for the plans being written by western states has been developed by the Western Regional Air Partnership (WRAP), which is co-chaired by Gov. Leavitt. WRAP's governing board consists of 13 tribal governments, 13 western states and the U.S. Departments of the Interior, Agriculture and EPA.

The partnership works closely with stakeholders, local governments, environment groups, industry and academia to compile regional air quality information and identify market-based strategies for reducing regional haze and improving visibility. Utah has played an active role in the partnership's work.

More information about the Utah plan and the public meeting schedule is available at <http://www.airquality.utah.gov/SIP/Regionalhazesip/regionalhaze.htm>.

New DEQ Deputy Director Named

July 14, 2003

Contacts:

Dianne Nielson, DEQ Executive Director, (801) 536-4402

Bill Sinclair, DEQ Deputy Director, (801) 536-4250

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - Utah Department of Environmental Quality Executive Director Dianne Nielson today announced the appointment of William Sinclair as the department's deputy director. He replaces Brent Bradford, who retired in April 2003. Sinclair is currently the director of DEQ's Division of Radiation Control.

"Bill brings experience in a range of environmental programs and strong leadership on environmental issues," Nielson said.

"This is a great opportunity for me to work with a variety of stakeholders to ensure clean air, land and water," Sinclair said. "I look forward to solving tough environmental issues that will benefit the citizens of Utah and contribute to our quality of life."

Sinclair began his career with the State of Utah 23 years ago as an environmental scientist in the Bureau of General Sanitation at the Utah Department of Health. He transferred to the Bureau of Solid and Hazardous Waste in 1982 to do compliance and permitting work. In 1985, he became the solid waste permits section manager, and then in 1990 the hazardous waste branch manager in DEQ's Division of Solid and Hazardous Waste. He was appointed director of the Utah Division of Radiation Control in 1993.

Before coming to the State of Utah, Sinclair served in the U.S. Air Force for seven years and worked in the area of environmental sanitation. He holds both bachelor and master degrees in environmental health from East Tennessee State University.

According to Nielson, Sinclair will continue to work on some radiation control projects during the transition, while a new division director is recruited. "Bill's commitment to the quality and integrity of the regulatory process will ensure a smooth transition regarding radioactive waste," she said.

Sinclair resides in Layton, Utah with his wife LouAnn. They have three children and four grandchildren. He is a native of Abingdon, Virginia.

Ozone Levels Increasing

July 21, 2003

Contacts:

Rick Sprott, Division of Air Quality Director, (801) 536-4000
Laura Vernon, DEQ Public Information Officer, (801) 536-4484

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is strongly advising residents along the Wasatch Front to limit their driving and do other things to help reduce high ozone levels through at least Thursday. The Wasatch Front is expected to experience very hot temperatures, little moisture and calm winds, which will contribute to more ozone.

"Conditions are ripe all this week for more ozone, and there will be a definite risk to health, especially for our children and parents," said Rick Sprott, director of the Division of Air Quality. "Several weeks of hot temperatures and pollution have kept ozone levels relatively high. Ozone hasn't been able to decrease much at night, which means that the hot, dry days are starting out with higher ozone levels that just get higher as the day goes on."

According to Sprott, five air monitors exceeded the federal health standard for ozone on Friday, July 18. Friday's exceedences mark the fourth day in July Utah has had ozone levels above the health standard.

"We are walking a very fine line with the ozone health standard," he said. "We really need people to do everything they possibly can to reduce ozone."

Residents can "Choose Clear Air" by carpooling, riding the bus or TRAX, postponing errands that can wait or combining errands into one trip, limiting a car's idling time, telecommuting, walking or riding a bike, conserving energy, keeping solvents and paints in airtight containers, filling the gas tank in the evening, using electric instead of gasoline-powered yard equipment and choosing other activities listed on DEQ's "Clean Air Utah" Web site at www.cleanair.utah.gov.

Ozone is an invisible gas formed from vehicle and industrial emissions in the presence of heat and sunlight. Continued exposure to ozone can cause breathing problems, reduce lung function, irritate eyes and nasal passages and reduce resistance to colds and other infections.

Those most at risk are active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma. To reduce exposure to ozone, they should limit prolonged outdoor exertion.

Exercise in the morning or later in the evening, when pollution levels are usually lower.

Spend less time participating in vigorous outdoor activities.

Take it a little easier when you're outside; don't overexert yourself.

Limit children's prolonged, strenuous outdoor activity.

Pay attention to your respiratory system such as coughing, wheezing and discomfort when you take a deep breath.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your health care provider. In addition to visiting the "Clean Air Utah" Web site, residents can call the Air Pollution Hotline at 975-4009 or (800) 228-5434 for current air quality conditions.

Acting Director Named for DEQ Division of Radiation Control

July 22, 2003

Contacts:

Dianne Nielson, DEQ Executive Director, (801) 536-4402

Craig Jones, Acting Director, Division of Radiation Control, (801) 536-4264

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - Craig Jones will serve as acting director of the DEQ Division of Radiation Control, replacing William Sinclair, who was appointed DEQ deputy director July 14. Jones manages the division's X-ray and radioactive materials licensing and inspection program.

"Craig has extensive knowledge and experience managing radiation issues," said DEQ Executive Director Dianne Nielson. "We are fortunate to have Craig's leadership abilities and expertise moving the Division forward."

Jones said he doesn't plan on making any changes during the interim. He will focus instead on keeping the momentum going. "I'm privileged to have this opportunity to work more closely with people involved in all types of radiation issues," Jones said. "There are many beneficial uses of X-rays and radioactive materials, and it's an interesting challenge to make sure the public is aware of how much radiation impacts all of us."

Jones began his career in 1975 at the University of Utah as a radioactive waste disposal technician in the Radiological Health Department, a research specialist for the

Department of Anatomy Radiobiology Laboratory and as a senior research specialist for the Department of Pharmacology Radiobiology Division.

In 1984, Jones came to the Bureau of Radiation Control at the Utah Department of Health as an environmental health scientist. He became manager of the X-ray and Radioactive Materials Licensing Section in the DEQ Division of Radiation Control in 1988.

Jones is a member of the Utah Radiological Emergency Response Team, a certified Radiation Protection Technologist and a member of the Health Physics Society. He has been a guest lecturer for the University of Utah Department of Family and Preventive Medicine since 1988 and the University of Utah Department of Health Promotion and Education since 1993.

Jones has a bachelor's degree in biology and a master's degree in public health, with an emphasis in industrial hygiene, from the University of Utah. He resides in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Public Comment Sought for South Valley Ground Water Cleanup Project

September 2, 2003

Contacts:

Dianne Nielson, Utah Natural Resource Damage Trustee, (801) 536-4402
Laura Vernon, UDEQ Public Information Officer, (801) 536-4484
Doug Bacon, UDEQ Project Manager, (801) 536-4282 (available after Sept. 4)

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation, in partnership with the Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District, is proposing to extract and treat contaminated ground water in Southwest Jordan Valley. The resulting municipal-quality drinking water will be used by the Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District to provide water to the cities of West Jordan, South Jordan, Riverton and Herriman. This treatment process will also help Kennecott contain the contaminated ground water.

The State of Utah Natural Resource Damage Trustee is holding a 30-day public comment period from Sept. 2 to Oct. 1, 2003, to solicit comments from the public on this proposed ground water treatment project. Two public hearings are also scheduled for:

Wednesday, Sept. 10, 2003

6:30 to 7 p.m.: informal review of information

7 to 9:30 p.m.: presentation of plan, question-and-answer period, and public comment

West Jordan City Hall, Council Chamber, 8000 S. Redwood Road, West Jordan

Thursday, Sept. 25, 2003

3:30 to 4 p.m.: informal review of information

4 to 6:30 p.m.: presentation of plan, question-and-answer period, and public comment

Utah Department of Environmental Quality, Room 101, 168 N. 1950 West, Salt Lake City

Public comments can also be provided to the Trustee via e-mail at nrdtrustee@utah.gov or by fax to (801) 536-0061 or by mail to Utah Department of Environmental Quality, NRD Trustee, P.O. Box 144810, Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4810. Comments must be transmitted or postmarked on or before October 1, 2003.

Documents explaining the project are available on the Internet at www.deq.utah.gov. Copies of the documents will also be available for public viewing on business days from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the West Jordan City Hall, 8000 S. Redwood Road, West Jordan, and at the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, 168 N. 1950 West, Salt Lake City.

For more information, please call (801) 536-4402.

DEQ Issues Smoke Health Advisory

September 24, 2003

Contacts:

Cheryl Heying, Air Quality Planning Branch Manager, (801) 536-4015

Laura Vernon, UDEQ Public Information Officer, (801) 536-4484

(Salt Lake City) - The Utah Department of Environmental Quality has issued a wildfire smoke health advisory for Utah and Salt Lake counties. Individuals with respiratory and heart disease, the elderly and young children should reduce heavy exertion outdoors, leave to an area that is clear of smoke or stay indoors. Those having problems should contact their health care provider. This health advisory will remain in effect through today and possibly tomorrow.

Particulate matter found in smoke can irritate the lungs and eyes. These fine particles can become lodged in delicate lung tissue, decreasing lung function, especially for people with respiratory and cardiovascular ailments. More information is available on the Web at www.cleanair.utah.gov.

Public Comment Period Extended for Southwest Jordan Valley Ground Water Cleanup Project

October 28, 2003

Contacts:

Dianne Nielson, State of Utah Natural Resource Damage Trustee, (801) 536-4402
Doug Bacon, UDEQ Project Manager, (801) 536-4282

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - The public comment period for the Southwest Jordan Valley Ground Water Cleanup Project has been extended by 20 days. The public comment period will now extend through Nov. 21, 2003.

"The extension will provide additional time for individuals to review and provide comment on the proposal and agreements for cleaning up sulfate-contaminated ground water," said Dianne Nielson, State of Utah Natural Resource Damage Trustee for the cleanup project.

Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation, in partnership with the Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District, is proposing to extract and treat contaminated ground water in Southwest Jordan Valley. The resulting municipal-quality drinking water will be used by the Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District to provide water to the cities of West Jordan, South Jordan, Riverton and Herriman. This treatment process will clean up the contaminated ground water and help to contain the spread of ground water contamination.

"I realize the proposal is a complex issue," Nielson said. "This extension will allow more time for individuals to review the information and provide meaningful comments."

Documents explaining the project are available on the Internet at www.deq.utah.gov. Copies of the documents are also available for public viewing on business days from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the West Jordan City Hall, 8000 S. Redwood Road, West Jordan, and at the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, 168 N. 1950 West, Salt Lake City.

Public comments can be provided to the Trustee via email at nrdtrustee@utah.gov or by fax to 801-536-0061 or by mail to the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, NRD Trustee, P.O. Box 144810, Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4810. Comments must be transmitted or postmarked on or before Nov. 21, 2003.

For more information, please call 801-536-4402.

"Red Light - Green Light" Air Quality Program Begins Saturday

October 30, 2003

Contacts:

Cheryl Heying, Planning Manager, Division of Air Quality, (801) 536-4015

Rick Sprott, Director, Division of Air Quality, (801) 536-4000

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - The Department of Environmental Quality's "Red Light - Green Light" program, which curtails wood burning along the Wasatch Front during winter inversions, starts its 11th season Saturday, Nov. 1, 2003, and continues until March 1, 2004.

The Bear River Health Department also has its own wood-burning program for Cache County. It was implemented in January 2003 as a proactive measure to reduce air pollution in Cache County and protect the health of residents. The Bear River Health Department's program for Cache County is similar to the one in effect along the Wasatch Front.

Wood-burning conditions are identified as "RED, YELLOW, GREEN." The system, used to notify citizens when they can burn, is simple: A red light indicates burning is prohibited, yellow means a voluntary no burn, and green means burning is allowed. Wood- and coal-burning fireplaces and stoves, when used, should be operated properly to reduce pollution.

Residents will also be asked to drive as little as possible during red and yellow days because cars contribute significantly to the area's air pollution. Industries will be asked to minimize their release of air pollutants and to ensure that air pollution control equipment is functioning properly. More information on actions residents can take to reduce pollution is available on the "Clean Air Utah" web site at www.cleanair.utah.gov.

Air Quality Division Director Rick Sprott urges citizens to be as committed to reducing pollution this winter as they were this summer "Clean air is vital to our quality of life and requires that residents proactively do what they can to keep the air they breathe as clean as possible," he said.

"We encourage people to choose clean-air activities that fit into their lifestyle, because their individual actions really do make a collective difference in keeping our air clean," Sprott said.

The program reduces particulate air pollution (PM10 and PM2.5) and carbon monoxide in Davis, Salt Lake, Utah and Weber counties. PM10 are particles of any kind that are 10 microns or less in diameter. They are 1/10 of a diameter of human hair. PM2.5 are particles smaller than PM10.

It is possible to have a "red day" without exceeding the federal health-based standards for PM10, PM2.5 or carbon monoxide because red days are called as pollution begins to approach unhealthy levels.

Fines can be levied against individuals who use a wood-burning fireplace or stove during a red-burn period. A first-time offender is charged up to \$25; a second-time offender pays \$50 to \$150; and a third-time offender faces fines from \$150 to \$299.

Pollution conditions are announced daily by newspapers, television and radio stations. Recorded updates can be obtained from the Air Pollution Index Hotline at 975-4009 for Salt Lake and Davis counties and (800) 228-5434 elsewhere, and on the "Clean Air Utah" web site at www.cleanair.utah.gov.

Cache County residents may call (435) 792-6612 for recorded daily updates on the wood-burn conditions in their area. Residents may also report illegal burning on "red days" by calling (435) 792-6611.

DEQ Division Director Appointed

November 3, 2003

Contacts:

Dianne Nielson, DEQ Executive Director, (801) 536-4402

Dane Finerfrock, Radiation Control Division Director, (801) 536-4250

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - Utah Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Executive Director Dianne Nielson has appointed Dane Finerfrock as the director of the Utah Division of Radiation Control. Finerfrock has been serving as the manager of the division's radioactive waste and environmental monitoring section.

"Dane has extensive experience dealing with radioactive waste issues," Nielson said. "I'm pleased to have him join the senior management staff of DEQ."

As division director, Finerfrock will oversee Utah's X-ray and radioactive materials licensing and inspection program, the safe handling and disposal of radioactive waste, the cleanup of abandoned uranium mill tailings, the transportation of radioactive materials

and radioactivity monitoring. Finerfrock will also lend his expertise to state and national groups working through radioactive waste issues.

"I'm looking forward to building on our successes and continuing to move the division forward in a positive direction," Finerfrock said.

Finerfrock has worked for DEQ since 1981. He graduated from the University of Utah in 1970 with a bachelor's degree in meteorology and in 1974 with a bachelor's degree in biology.

Utah Moves Another Step Closer to Cleaner Air Gov. Walker Signs First State-approved Regional Haze Plan

December 12, 2003

Contacts:

Amanda Covington, (801) 538-1503
Justin Smart, (801) 538-1053
Laura Vernon, DEQ, (801) 536-4484

Gov. Walker today signed a letter of submittal to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, setting in motion Utah's plan to improve and protect air quality in national parks in the West.

"Utah's plan is a significant milestone because it represents a regional approach to reducing haze in the West's most celebrated national parks, five of which are in our own backyard," Walker said. "That means that over the next two decades Utah's air will become cleaner, and visitors to our national parks will more fully enjoy the scenic vistas that deserve to be protected."

Utah is the first state to have an approved regional haze plan. Utah's plan aims to reduce air pollution by using cost-effective, market-based programs rather than traditional command-and-control regulations. The plan also considers impacts of smoke from prescribed fires and focuses on renewable energy and energy efficiency. The plan's goal is to reduce sulfur dioxide by 50 to 70 percent by 2040. The first phase of the plan goes through 2018.

All five of Utah's national parks - Arches, Capitol Reef, Canyonlands, Bryce Canyon and Zion - experience haze.

According to Dianne Nielson, executive director of the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, the plan details strategies Utah will use to reduce the full range of human-caused pollutants that contribute to regional haze.

"It's a good plan and one that makes sense for Utah and for the West," Nielson said. "It is progress toward cleaner air."

In addition to Utah, four other states are submitting their market-based program plans by the end of December 2003: Arizona, New Mexico, Wyoming and Oregon. The remaining western states will develop a more prescriptive regulatory program.

The Western Regional Air Partnership (WRAP) provided much of the technical support for the plans. WRAP is a partnership of western states, western tribes and three federal agencies.

The partnership works closely with stakeholders, local governments, environmental groups, industry and academia to compile regional air quality information and identify market-based strategies for reducing regional haze and improving visibility.

Utah's regional haze plan is available on the Web at www.airquality.utah.gov/SIP/regionalhazesip/regionalhaze.htm. More information on the WRAP can be found at www.wrapair.org (opens in a new window).

DEQ IT Director Appointed

December 30, 2003

Contacts:

Dianne Nielson, DEQ Executive Director, (801) 536-4402

Ryan Walker, DEQ IT Director, (801) 536-4466

(Salt Lake City, Utah) - Utah Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Executive Director Dianne Nielson has appointed Ryan Walker as the director of DEQ's Office of Information Technology (IT). Walker has been serving as interim IT director since September. Walker replaces Ken Elliott, who accepted a position with the Utah Division of Information Technology Services.

"Ryan is the right individual to lead DEQ in providing more efficient delivery of environmental services through the use of technology," Nielson said. "His experience and commitment will benefit us as a department and all those who use our services."

During his career, Walker has worked as a computer programmer, systems administrator, technical support specialist and supervisor.

As director, he will manage a team of programmers, systems administrators and technical support specialists. He will be responsible for developing an annual IT plan, managing a budget, keeping DEQ's IT systems working and improving those systems as new technology develops.

"DEQ has been and always will be a frontrunner in using technology to be more productive and efficient," Walker said. "We've been recognized nationally and by the state for our innovative work."

Walker began working for the State of Utah in 1984. He came from the Department of Health to the Department of Environmental Quality in 1991 when DEQ was established.