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Department of
Environmental Quality

Alan Matheson
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Brad T Johnson
Deputy Director

NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT

Donna Kemp Spangler
Communications Director
Office: 801-536-4484
Cell: 801-554-4944
dspangler@utah.gov

Water Quality Board Awards DEQ \$1 Million for Utah Lake Study

Funding will help agency determine causes, identify solutions for lake's frequent algal blooms

SALT LAKE CITY -- The Water Quality Board awarded a \$1 million Hardship Grant today to the Department of Environmental Quality to support the second phase of a Utah Lake nutrient study. The two-phase, four-year water-quality study will look at the role excess nutrients play in the water quality and ecology of the lake and will build on the initial Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study that was put on hold in 2007.

The Division of Water Quality (DWQ) reinitiated the study as part of Utah's statewide nutrient strategy and in response to the increase in the frequency and severity of algal blooms and their impacts on Utah Lake and downstream waters. This study, which began in 2015, will evaluate water quality data, support research to better understand the role of nutrients in the unique ecology of Utah Lake, develop tools for effective decision-making, and engage stakeholders and partners in the process.

"It's time for us to take a hard look at the impacts of nutrients on Utah Lake," explained Walt Baker, director of the Division of Water Quality. "This study will provide us with the data and tools we need to evaluate the complex chemical and biological factors at play in the lake and make decisions that improve and protect this valuable resource."

Phase 1 of the study will consolidate existing data for the lake, identify data gaps, assess the extent to which the lake is meeting its designated beneficial uses, develop an analysis of the quantity of nutrients entering the lake, and select a water quality model that DWQ can use for its decision-making.

Phase 2 will use the information collected in the first phase to guide additional research needed to develop nutrient water quality goals specific to Utah Lake. These goals will guide decisions regarding further nutrient reductions in the watershed beyond those already required. For example, the technology-based phosphorus effluent rule, passed by the Water Quality Board in 2014, currently requires wastewater treatment plants in Utah County and across the state to meet a phosphorus limit of one microgram per liter (mg/L) by 2020. These types of nutrient reductions, along with other management strategies, safeguard the lake and its beneficial uses.

Stakeholder involvement is a key component of the study's work plan. DWQ has assembled a large workgroup representing a broad range of interests, including local municipalities,

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wastewater treatment plants, and state and local governments. Subgroups of stakeholders have been tasked with guiding specific work elements in the water quality plan.

“The challenges facing Utah Lake affect all of us,” added Baker.” We believe a collaborative, informed, and science-based approach is our best hope for finding solutions that meet the needs of the lake, its users, and the aquatic life that depend on a healthy lake for their survival.”

To view the Draft Utah Lake Water Quality Work Plan or learn more about the Utah Lake Workgroup, visit the Utah Department of Environmental Quality website at <http://utahlake.deq.utah.gov>

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About DEQ

Established in 1991, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality’s (DEQ) mission is to safeguard public health and quality of life by protecting and enhancing the environment. DEQ implements state and federal environmental laws and works with individuals, community groups and businesses to protect the quality of Utah’s air, land and water. For more information, visit www.deq.utah.gov, follow DEQ on Facebook ([utahdeq](#)) and Twitter ([UtahDEQ](#)), or call 1-800-458-0145.