



State of Utah

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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**DEQ Releases Annual Environmental Report for 2017**

*State of the Environment Report Spotlights Agency Successes, Continuous Improvement*

SALT LAKE CITY – The Utah Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) released its annual State of the Environment Report today. This end-of-year report provides a comprehensive look at agency activities and initiatives in 2017 that improved Utah’s environment and quality of life and created new economic opportunities.

“Our employees work tirelessly to accomplish our mission — safeguarding the state’s air, land, and water through balanced regulation,” said Alan Matheson, executive director at DEQ. “This year’s report not only provides a synopsis of what we do every day to ensure the health and well-being of the people of Utah, it also highlights the many ways we work collaboratively with stakeholders to find reasonable and effective solutions to environmental problems.”

The report also features DEQ’s continuous improvement initiatives to improve efficiencies and save taxpayer dollars.

“Our dedicated employees are putting in extra time and effort to achieve these performance improvements while still tackling their usual workload,” said Matheson. “They know that today’s investment in innovation will pay long-term dividends: better public-health, environmental, and economic outcomes; more time spent on mission-focused work; and improved customer service to all DEQ stakeholders.”

Highlights of this year’s report include:

- **Lead in Schools Initiative:** DEQ partnered with school districts and local health departments across the state to protect schoolchildren from possible elevated lead levels in their school drinking water. No widespread lead levels were found. Of the schools that tested to date with levels above the EPA action limit have taken action to fix the problem.
- **Utah Winter Fine Particulate Study:** DEQ leveraged an air-quality research appropriation from the legislature to generate federal, state, and private-sector funding of approximately \$2 million to conduct a comprehensive, month-long investigation into the complex conditions that lead to wintertime inversions.
- **Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs):** DEQ led a collaborative, multi-entity response to numerous HABs across the state — conducting and coordinating sampling, working with

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affected stakeholders, and keeping the public informed of changing conditions — while making judicious use of limited agency resources.

- **Drinking Water and Wastewater System Funding:** The Division of Drinking Water and Division of Water Quality provided \$18.6 million and \$21.4 million, respectively, in financial assistance to drinking-water and wastewater system construction projects across the state in 2017.
- **Land Cleanups:** DEQ facilitated the cleanups of contaminated or potentially contaminated lands that paved the way for construction of the Ogden Business Exchange, The Crossing in South Salt Lake, and development of The Forge at Geneva.

The web-based report is easy to access from desktop or mobile devices, and its multi-media design features video interviews with DEQ employees, colorful infographics, and engaging photos.

“We invite members of the public to read the 2017 report to learn more about the ways we work to protect both you and our environment,” said Matheson. “Continuous improvement is a commitment we make to you, the people of Utah, and we welcome your ideas on how we can serve you better.”

View the 2017 State of the Environment report at [report.deq.utah.gov](http://report.deq.utah.gov).

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#### **About DEQ**

Established in 1991, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality’s (DEQ) mission is to safeguard and improve Utah’s air, land and water through balanced regulation. 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](http://www.deq.utah.gov), follow DEQ on Facebook ([utahdeq](https://www.facebook.com/utahdeq)) and Twitter ([UtahDEQ](https://twitter.com/UtahDEQ)), or call 1-800-458-0145.