



State of Utah

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June 10, 2016

DIVISION OF WATER QUALITY
UTAH DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
PUBLIC NOTICE OF DRAFT STUDY PLAN
UTAH AND COLORADO WATER SURVEY FOR
MUSSELS AND SNAILS

PURPOSE OF PUBLIC NOTICE

The purpose of this public notice is to solicit public comments on the Draft Study Plan, Utah and Colorado Water Survey for Mussels and Snails.

BACKGROUND

The Division of Water Quality has teamed with the State of Colorado to investigate the historical presence of mussels and snails in both Utah and Colorado. Utah State University was awarded the contract to conduct these investigations after all qualified proposals submitted to the Utah Department of Administrative Services, Division of Purchasing were evaluated. Utah is only financially responsible for the Utah portion of the work.

In 2013, the United States Environmental Protection Agency released new water quality criteria for ammonia. These new criteria are more stringent than the current criteria and are designed to ensure protection for ammonia sensitive species (specifically unionid mussels and non-pulmonate snails). These new criteria may require that many existing facilities that discharge into waters inhabited by ammonia sensitive species be upgraded to meet the new standards, likely at significant costs to the companies and governments that operate those facilities. The US Environmental Protection Agency recognizes that the new criteria may be overly stringent for waters that do not naturally support ammonia sensitive species, and allows states to derive site-specific criteria that reflect each waterbody's potential to support the aquatic life naturally expected at each site. Site-specific (or watershed-specific) ammonia criteria may make ecological and financial sense for Utah and Colorado if ammonia-sensitive mollusk species are less common in Utah and Colorado than in other states.

The synthesis of these data will enable Utah to identify specific water bodies that may be subject to the new ammonia criteria and represent the first step in identifying the types of water bodies that are either likely to contain ammonia sensitive mollusks or not.

The draft Study Plan describes the approach, records to be reviewed, and products to be delivered.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public comments are invited any time prior to the deadline of the close of business on July 15, 2016. Written public comments can be submitted to: Chris Bittner, Utah Division of Water Quality, P.O. Box 144870, Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4870 or by email at: cbittner@utah.gov. After considering public comment the Utah Division of Water Quality will finalize the study plan. The draft Study Plan is available for public review under <http://www.deq.utah.gov/NewsNotices/notices/water/index.htm>. If internet access is not available, a copy may be obtained by calling Chris Bittner at 801-536-4371.