

# Great Salt Lake Advisory Council

11th Annual Report to the Utah State Legislature  
Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee  
February 2021



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*“The Great Salt Lake Advisory Council is playing a vital role in helping to balance the many important uses of the Great Salt Lake. Now is the time to ensure this valuable natural treasure is protected for future generations.”*

— Governor Gary Herbert



# Great Salt Lake Advisory Council

## BACKGROUND

The Great Salt Lake Advisory Council (Council) was established by House Bill 343 in the 2010 session of the Utah State Legislature. Council members were appointed by Governor Herbert, with consent of the Utah Senate, in June 2010. Governor Herbert kicked off the initial Council meeting on June 30, 2010.



Great Salt Lake water levels are in a long-term decline, threatening lake industries, aquaculture, recreation, conservation and other uses. The Council compiled, prioritized and analyzed strategies to address low lake levels and to secure water for GSL. © Charles Uibel

## Duties of the Great Salt Lake Advisory Council

Legislation creating the Great Salt Lake Advisory Council identifies five specific “duties” of the Council:

**1) ADVISE** the governor, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) *“on the sustainable use, protection, and development of the Great Salt Lake”* (GSL) *“in terms of balancing: (i) sustainable use; (ii) environmental health; and (iii) reasonable access for existing and future development.”*

**2) ASSIST** the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands (“FFSL”) in its statutory responsibilities for the Great Salt Lake (i.e. to prepare and implement a comprehensive management plan, initiate and publish studies of the lake, coordinate activities of DNR divisions with respect to the lake).

**3) RECOMMEND** appointments to the GSL technical team and utilize technical support from that team.

**4) ASSIST** DNR and DEQ and their boards in their responsibilities for the Great Salt Lake.

**5) REPORT** *“annually”* to the Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee *“on the council’s activities.”*

## 2020 Tasks and Activities of the Great Salt Lake Advisory Council

During 2020, the Great Salt Lake Advisory Council addressed all five of its primary statutory “duties” as follows:

**1) ADVISE** — The Council advised the Executive branch, including the Governor’s Office, Agency Directors and department and agency managers on issues that impact GSL sustainable use, protection and development, including: strategies for water supply, policies for water administration, priorities for research, benefits from conservation, and others.

**2) ASSIST** — The Council met frequently with officials of the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands to assist in and provide support for the Division’s statutory responsibilities and priorities, and to assist in initiating and publishing studies of the lake – such as the reports on water conservation impacts, feasibility of strategies to get water to the lake, and implementing legislative direction on water supply and policy.

**3) RECOMMEND** — The Council received reports and presentations from the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands’ Great Salt Lake Technical Team and utilized technical support from that team on topics, including: air quality, hot topics impacting the lake, dust sources and quantification, etc.

**4) ASSIST** — The Council worked with both the Utah Department of Natural Resources and the Utah Department of Environmental Quality on Great Salt Lake issues ranging from water supply to water elevation, from invasive plants to research priorities, from water management to water quality, and on other issues.

**5) REPORT** — The Council prepared and provided its 10th Annual Report to the Utah State Legislature Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environmental Quality Appropriations Subcommittee.

The Council further fulfilled its statutory responsibilities to advise, assist, recommend, and report by holding five (5) formal meetings in 2020, with briefings, updates, reports, discussions, and counsel on many GSL-related topics. Some 2020 Council activities are summarized, below.

## Feasibility of Water Strategies for Great Salt Lake

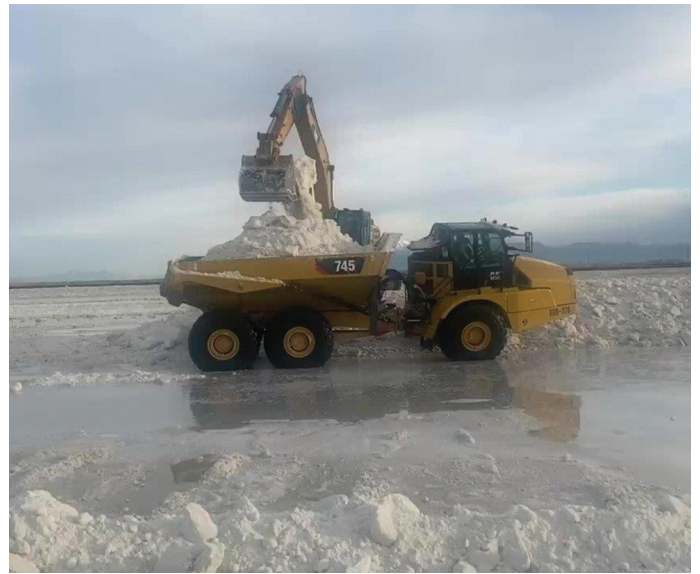
In September 2020 the Great Salt Lake Advisory Council completed a compelling and collaborative report entitled *Water Strategies for Great Salt Lake: Legal Analysis and Review of Select Water Strategies for Great Salt Lake*. In 2017, the Council had identified 70 strategies to maintain or increase water deliveries to Great Salt Lake. This 2020 report analyzed the legal, policy and technical feasibility of implementing 12 of the most promising strategies to maintain or increase water to GSL. The feasibility report organizes the recommended strategies into four categories: foundational, operational, tactical and organizational. The report concluded that while each of the strategies will improve water management, a combination of key strategies is necessary to improve water delivery to Great Salt Lake. The Council is hopeful that the proposed 12 strategies will be implemented to assure positive impacts on Great Salt Lake water levels.

## HCR-10 Report and Recommendations

Great Salt Lake Advisory Council provided resources, in 2020, to facilitate implementation of HCR-10 – “*Concurrent Resolution to Address Declining Water Levels of Great Salt Lake*.” Enacted in 2019 at the request of the Council, HCR-10 prompted the Utah Departments of Natural Resources and Environmental Quality to convene a stakeholder group (Steering Group) consisting of State officials, experts in water law and municipal and agricultural water supply, agricultural producers, conservation and recreation interests, and representatives of industries that rely upon the lake. The Steering Group met regularly throughout 2020 and developed an influential report entitled *Recommendations to Ensure Adequate Water Flows to Great Salt Lake and Its Wetlands*. The report, completed in December 2020, presents 16 viable “Strategic Opportunities” to get water to the lake. The Great Salt Lake Advisory Council and the HCR-10 Steering Group are hopeful that the document will ignite continuing conversations, studies and thoughtful decision-making.

## Conservation Impacts Study

In October 2020 the Great Salt Lake Advisory Council released a report, entitled *Conservation Impacts Study*. The report examined the impacts of conservation on Utah water resource planning and on large water development projects that have the potential to negatively impact the declining Great Salt Lake. The study evaluated four water providers in Northern Utah. It concluded that significant, yet achievable, conservation could postpone the need for certain water development projects for another 40 years. For example, if the per person consumption is reduced by 50 gallons per day, to 173 gallons per day person, that level of conservation would postpone the need for large water projects such as the Bear River Development Project beyond 2065. In 2021, this study will likely be expanded to consider the conservation impacts of other Wasatch Front water suppliers.



Great Salt Lake supports extraction industries which produce salts, metals and premium plant nutrients from heavy brine in evaporation ponds. The lake is also a valuable resource for aquaculture, conservation, recreation, water treatment, and other activities. Overall, Great Salt Lake contributes \$1.3 billion annually to Utah’s economy. © Joe Havasi

## Great Salt Lake Public Information

The Great Salt Lake Advisory Council has commissioned or facilitated numerous impactful studies and reports on the importance of Great Salt Lake, its contributions to the State of Utah, and ways to preserve those benefits and protect Lake resources. To help disseminate this timely and important data and information, and to help inform the public about GSL, in early 2020, the Council sought the assistance of information experts. Together with that outside help and expertise, the Council developed a general public information strategy. We also prepared written materials, including executive summaries, holding statements, talking points and press releases. Council staff also received presentation training and public education advice. This effort resulted in significant opportunities to share our information about Great Salt Lake

## Great Salt Lake Coordinator

For several years, the Great Salt Lake Advisory Council has recommended that the State of Utah establish a full-time coordinator specifically for Great Salt Lake. A dedicated staff person is required to coordinate decisions and actions across the watershed to minimize costs and maximize benefits to Great Salt Lake and its wetlands. The Utah Legislature approved this position during the 2020 legislative session. This person is expected to: provide GSL-related coordination between governments, agencies, watersheds and stakeholders; facilitate research and public education; and contribute much-needed staff support for the Advisory Council and other GSL-related state groups. With more than a decade of experience on Great Salt Lake, Laura Vernon was appointed as Great Salt Lake Coordinator in July 2020.

# Great Salt Lake Advisory Council Summary of 2020 Council Meetings



Great Salt Lake adds \$1.3 billion annually to Utah's economy, with hunting and other recreational uses (bird watching, wildlife viewing, sailing, camping, bike riding, photography) being important components. © Ann Neville

## January 8, 2020 — Davis County Administration Building

- Presentation on North Davis Sewer District's Proposed Change in Discharge Location by Jacobs Engineering
- Update on New Feasibility Study on the Bear River Development Project by Utah Division of Water Resources
- Review and approval of 10th Annual Report by Great Salt Lake Advisory Council (GSLAC or Council)
- Discussion of Legislation and Council support for dedicated Great Salt Lake staff
- Approval, after discussion, of various Council projects, studies and reports

## March 11, 2020 — Eccles Wildlife Education Center

- Research Reports from GSLTT on hot topic research grants by Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands
- Review and approval of 10th Annual Report by Great Salt Lake Advisory Council by Council Vice Chair
- Legislative Report on issues relevant to Great Salt Lake by Council members and meeting attendees
- Presentation on Water Supply Forecast for 2002 by National Weather Service

## July 8, 2020 — Virtual Meeting Via Google Meet

- Report on GSL Salinity Advisory Committee by Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands
- Review of Great Salt Lake Technical Team Research by Utah Division of Water Resources
- Formal report on Legal Analysis and Review of Select Water Strategies for Great Salt Lake by Clyde Snow Attorneys at Law
- Legislative Wrap-up by member of Utah House of Representatives and meeting attendees

## September 9, 2020 — Virtual Meeting Via Google Meet

- GSLTT report on research of dust sources along the Wasatch Front by Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands
- Report by Council committee on membership
- Update on Council projects on HCR-10 facilitation and on Council communications strategy
- Presentation on Conservation Impacts Study by Bowen Collins
- Report on Executive Summary for report on feasibility of implementing water strategies
- Update on HCR-10 Steering Group deliberations by National Audubon Society

## November 4, 2020 — Virtual Meeting Via Google Meet

- Research Reports from GSLTT by Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands
- Report on issues and actions during meeting of the Salinity Advisory Committee by Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands
- Update on implementation of public communications efforts by Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands
- Approve GSLAC Project funding by Council
- Presentation of HCR-10 Steering Group report on Recommendations to Ensure Adequate Water Flows to Great Salt Lake and It's Wetlands by Jacobs Engineering

## Great Salt Lake Advisory Council

### Chair

Don Leonard

### Vice-Chair

Dave Livermore

### Box Elder County

Commissioner

Jeffrey Scott

### Davis County

Commissioner

Randy Elliott

### Salt Lake County

Dina Blaes

### Tooele County

Dan Tuttle

### Weber County

Commissioner

Gage Froerer

### Municipal Government

Tom Ward

### Conservation Interests

Dave Livermore

### Migratory Bird

Protection Areas

Jeff Richards

### Extractive Industry

Joe Havasi

### Aquaculture

Don Leonard

### Publicly Owned

Treatment Works

Leland Myers

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