

Ongoing Department Priorities Utah Legislative Interim Committee

Active & Balanced Management

The Utah Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is committed to enhancing Utah's abundant natural resources. The department's active management approach allows the state to forecast challenges/opportunities and solve complex issues. It enables us to serve as good stewards of the resources committed to the state and to anticipate future needs. This is done while balancing our three core responsibilities:

1. Maximize responsible development of Utah's natural resources
2. Promote and enhance recreational opportunities statewide
3. Ensure the safety of residents and state visitors, and the wildlife that call Utah home.



Meeting Future Needs

Utah's population is projected to double by 2060. As a result, DNR is working to determine how the projected growth will impact the state's natural resources and mitigate those impacts to resources like water, recreation, wildlife.

- Meeting Utah's future water needs requires a strategic, multi-faceted solution, including more conservation, new development and increased efficiencies to existing infrastructure
- Record visitation to Utah's state parks in 2015 highlights the popularity of Utah's outdoor recreation. Long range plans are being developed to increase recreation by adding park amenities and evaluating expansion opportunities.



Improving Watersheds

Improving priority watersheds is critical to our quality of life. In the past 10 years, over 1.2 million acres of land has been restored or rehabilitated statewide through Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative. Another 100,000 acres will be restored this year.



WRI restores neglected watersheds and enhances native grasses and plants across landscape boundaries. It focuses on three ecosystem values: land health and biological diversity; water quality and yield and opportunities for sustainable uses of natural resources. While DNR manages the program, over 100 federal, state, county, local and nongovernment groups and organizations contribute to the program.



The left image was taken before the Tooele County East Vernon Habitat Restoration project started. In an effort to preserve sagebrush in the area and improve habitat for sage-grouse, pinyon and juniper trees were removed from 415 acres in 2012. The after picture (right) was taken three years later from the same location.

WRI increases the health of Utah's watersheds in the following ways:

- Improves water quality and yield
- Reduces catastrophic wildfire
- Restores the structure and function of watersheds following wildfires
- Enhances wildlife populations
- Increases forage for sustainable agriculture and wildlife

Water Rights Adjudication: Order and Certainty

Adjudication is a critical piece of the statewide water resource management strategy, which is to maintain a complete and accurate record of water rights. The process helps bring order and certainty to the water right records throughout the state by:

- Defining and clarifying existing rights on the records of the State Engineer.
- Identifying and quantifying unknown rights that have yet to be asserted by various parties, including the federal government.
- Removing unused and abandoned rights from the state's records through judicial decree.

