

Recommended State Water Strategy

A selection of major accomplishments so far...

- An improved culture of collaboration and communication and increased involvement from a diverse group of stakeholders in all aspects of water.
- Increased visibility of and leadership on water issues - this effort has changed and elevated the conversation regarding water.
- Conservation has been increasingly prioritized as a strategy for meeting Utah's water needs (Executive Water Finance Board, irrigation timer rebates, DWRe collaboration with conservancy districts for Utah Water Savers, work has commenced with a third party contract to set regional water conservation goals) (1.1).
- A study is in process to establish and utilize clear standards for water use measurement, tracking, and reporting (1.1, 1.2).
- A study is in process to establish water efficiency standards to benchmark water use and identify conservation potential (1.3).
- A working group is underway to set up regional watershed/river basin councils (3.4, 9.8). These councils will likely assist in a myriad of activities including:
 - Identify intended and unintended consequences of water efficiency and conservation to ensure appropriate choice and implementation of particular strategies (1.5).
 - Promote local, regional, and statewide water conservation planning, implementation, and evaluation (1.8).
 - Create benefits for farmers who help optimize regional water supplies, conserve in-stream flows, or enhance water quality (3.4).
 - Advising entities with legal rights and responsibilities for water resources, balancing and integrating their responsibilities to find unique solutions to watershed-level issues (3.5)
 - Advising water efficiency and conservation research (3.7).
- Executive Water Finance Board is looking at the financial constraints to conservation, the impact of rate structures, and elasticity of demand (1.4, 1.6, 1.7). Further, they are working to align water pricing with infrastructure needs and to clarify statute if needed to allow for capital reserve funds. They are also developing financing terms and conditions (Governor had six items) as part of any use of state funds for water projects and are exploring other financing options (6.1, 6.7, 6.8). These efforts may ultimately lead to recommendations for future legislation. Additionally, large water agencies are also engaged in some of these same efforts for their respective areas.
- The Governor has recommended and the Legislature funded rebates for smart irrigation timers (1.6)
- WBWCD and JVWCD and other water retailers have improved billing information to better inform retail customers of their water use relative to estimated needs and compared to neighbors (1.6).
- Water Conservancy Districts have been promoting and tailoring Localscapes programs to provide an aesthetically-pleasing, customer-focused, strategy to promote more water-efficient landscaping (1.7).
- DWRe has assembled a diverse advisory group to direct an updated/revised State Water Plan which will incorporate considerations from throughout the State Water Strategy.

- The Watershed Restoration Initiative continues to leverage and coordinate funding to manage and restore watersheds to decrease transpiration, increase runoff, and protect water quality (2.2).
- Utah DWRe and conservancy districts actively working to secure right of way and prepare for the Lake Powell Pipeline and Bear River Development Projects in order to develop and beneficially use Utah's allocated share of interstate rivers (2.3). The Executive Water Finance Board is developing criteria and strategies to ensure responsible financing of these efforts (2.8).
- The Legislature funded the Iron County Water Conservancy District Aquifer Storage and Recovery project (2.5).
- Rep. Tim Hawkes passed legislation forming the Agriculture Water Optimization Task Force. This group will likely provide assistance in:
 - Creating mechanisms that help agricultural water users contribute to improving water quantity and quality management (3.5).
 - Supporting agriculture's infrastructure, water use measurement, data, and reporting needs (3.7).
 - Dedicating funding for water efficiency and conservation research of specific relevance to the Utah Water Strategy (3.8) in a way that creates meaningful benefits for farmers to optimize water use and protect water quality (3.4).
 - Studying opportunities and risks of more efficient water delivery (4.4).
 - Exploring technology's effect on agricultural water usage. (11.3)
- Legislation was introduced during the 2018 and 2019 Legislature to begin the dialogue on mandatory secondary metering for all residential water use (1.2, 1.6, 2.5, 11.1, 11.8). DWRe has allotted \$3 million from loan funds for secondary water meter installation and provide lower interest rates for these installations. SB 52 would require meters on all new secondary water systems, earmarks \$10 million in loan funds, and requires the Utah Water Task Force to study secondary water metering.
- Legislation was passed during the 2017 session which encouraged study of possible options for expanding groups who may file an application for instream flows. In addition, the 2019 legislative session removed the sunset on an existing law providing instream flows for certain species of trout. Additional legislation is in process to develop more lasting solutions to expand tools to protect instream flows (4.2).
- Water banking working group underway to develop strategies to facilitate development of environmental and agricultural water markets (4.5).
- The State has adopted a 1 mg/l phosphorus limit currently being implemented. Stakeholders are working on a nutrient strategy that will address nutrient loading on a waterbody-by-waterbody basis. A research initiative is being developed for Utah Lake under the direction of the Utah Lake Commission and with funding from the Water Quality Board and the Legislature (5.1).
- The Division of Water Quality launched a new Harmful Algal Bloom program that was successful in protecting public health through recreational advisories on 25 water bodies.
- Implementation efforts in the North Fork Virgin River watershed resulted in significant reductions of E. coli in Zion National Park (5.10).
- The Water Quality Board authorized financing of new wastewater infrastructure for Provo City (\$77 million), and Central Valley Water Reclamation Facility (\$65 million) and South Salt Lake City (\$11 million) (5.7).
- Moab City opened a new wastewater treatment plant (5.8)
- Logan City and Salem City broke ground on the construction of new wastewater treatment plants (5.8).

- The Water Quality Board and the Utah Conservation Commission developed a 0% loan program to finance agricultural projects at animal feeding operations with water quality benefits. Two applicants have been approved under the new program (5.3)
- Dedicated resources have been targeted toward phragmites control and elimination in Utah waterways including \$500,000 specifically for Sovereign Lands during the 2018 Legislature (5.6).
- Several wastewater treatment plants are planning and implementing upgrades. DWQ working with ULCT and developers on Low-Impact Development standards that will increase stormwater retention and infiltration (5.8).
- Weber Basin Water Conservancy District has begun working on a basin-specific climate change model to assist in assessing vulnerabilities and develop risk management strategies developed through studies to plan for climate change impacts. (7.2).
- Water rights adjudication has been expedited through a redistribution of state sales tax allocations to the Division of Water Rights and a streamlined process (9.2, 9.9, 10.5). Furthermore, the State Engineer has been empowered to define water duties under HB 118 Authority of State Engineer by Rep. Hawkes and Senator Dayton (9.4)
- The Legislature has directed the Department of Natural Resources to form working groups to, among other things, review constitutional requirements that preclude cities from selling surplus water and issues surrounding extraterritorial jurisdiction. These have turned into “regular and robust forums for stakeholder involvement in modernizing Utah water law and policy” and strengthen other existing efforts (9.7, 9.8).
- Sewer districts are piloting a new algae-based treatment system.(11.2).
- Many efforts are underway to improve the quality of water data collected and reported (11.8). Much of these efforts are being conducted by state agencies voluntarily or in response to specific audit recommendations. Further, during the 2018 Session HB 303 Drinking Water Source Sizing Requirements (Sandall), strengthened the data requirement for water use.
- Also of note, are the efforts to make water data more accessible to the public (3.9). During June of 2018, the Division of Water Resources launched Utah’s Open Water Data visualization tool (<http://dwre-utahdnr.opendata.arcgis.com/>).