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State Water Policy Amendments

2025 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor:

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LONG TITLE

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General Description:

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This bill amends the state water policy.

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Highlighted Provisions:

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This bill:

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▸ addresses water quality in groundwater;

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▸ encourages monitoring of critical watersheds;

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▸ promotes state water planning;

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▸ accounts for regionally appropriate water reuse; and

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▸ makes technical changes.

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Money Appropriated in this Bill:

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None

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Other Special Clauses:

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None

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Utah Code Sections Affected:

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AMENDS:

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73-1-21, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2024, Chapter 37

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Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

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Section 1. Section **73-1-21** is amended to read:

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73-1-21 . State water policy.

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(1) It is the policy of the state that:

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(a) Utah shall pursue adequate, reliable, affordable, sustainable, and clean water

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resources, recognizing that Utah is one of the most arid states in the nation and as

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such, there is, and will continue to be, a need to ensure Utah's finite water resources

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are used beneficially;

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(b) Utah will promote:

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(i) water conservation, efficiency, and the optimal use of water resources, while

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identifying intended and unintended consequences to ensure appropriate choice

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- 32 and implementation of particular strategies;
- 33 (ii) water resource development and the creation of new water infrastructure
34 necessary to meet the state's growing demand and promote economic development;
- 35 (iii) compliance with state statutes regarding Lake Powell pipeline development and
36 Bear River development;
- 37 (iv) the timely replacement of aging or inefficient water resource, drinking water,
38 wastewater, and storm water infrastructure;
- 39 (v) the optimal use of agricultural water to sustain and improve food production and
40 the productive capacity of agricultural lands;
- 41 (vi) water quality in rivers ~~[and]~~ , lakes, and groundwater that:
- 42 (A) complies with state clean water and safe drinking water statutes; and
43 (B) protects public health;
- 44 (vii) water pricing and funding mechanisms that:
- 45 (A) provide revenue stability while encouraging conservation, efficiency, and
46 optimization efforts;
- 47 (B) adequately cover infrastructure needs; and
48 (C) balance social, economic, public interest, and environmental values;
- 49 (viii) respect for water rights;
- 50 (ix) standards for accurate water use measurement, telemetry, tracking, enforcement,
51 and reporting;
- 52 (x) efforts to educate and engage the public in:
- 53 (A) individual actions that protect water quality, including preventing and
54 mitigating water pollution; and
55 (B) conservation practices and the efficient and optimal use of water resources;
- 56 (xi) the implementation of cyber security and physical security measures for water
57 infrastructure;
- 58 (xii) the study and consideration of mechanisms for increased flexibility in water use
59 such as water banking and split season uses;
- 60 (xiii) the monitoring of activities in critical watershed areas to protect the watersheds;
- 61 ~~[(xiii)]~~ (xiv) continued improvements in the management of water resources through
62 protection, restoration, and science-based evaluation of Utah watersheds,
63 increased reservoir capacity, and aquifer recharge or aquifer storage and recovery;
- 64 ~~[(xiv)]~~ (xv) the development and beneficial use of Utah's allocated share of interstate
65 rivers, including Utah's allocations under the 1922 and 1948 Colorado River

- 66 Compacts and the 1980 Amended Bear River Compact;
- 67 [~~(xv)~~] (xvi) the study and development of strategies and practices necessary to address
- 68 declining water levels and protect the water quality and quantity of the Great Salt
- 69 Lake, Utah Lake, and Bear Lake, taking into consideration natural climate change,
- 70 natural weather systems and patterns, and normal cyclic water level change over
- 71 time, while balancing economic, social, and environmental needs;
- 72 [~~(xvi)~~] (xvii) regulations and practices, including voluntary practices, that maintain
- 73 sufficient stream flows and lake levels to provide reasonable access to recreational
- 74 activities and protect and restore water quality, quantity, and healthy ecosystems,
- 75 including protecting groundwater and surface water sources from pollution;
- 76 [~~(xvii)~~] (xviii) equitable access to safe, affordable, and reliable drinking water to
- 77 protect public health;
- 78 [~~(xviii)~~] (xix) regulations and practices that encourage effective treatment of
- 79 wastewater to maximize its availability for beneficial use and minimize depletion
- 80 and the further degradation of other waters;
- 81 [~~(xix)~~] (xx) the control of invasive species that threaten or degrade waters of the state;
- 82 [~~(xx)~~] (xxi) coordination among the state, water providers, water users, local
- 83 governments, government agencies, and researchers in the study of ways weather
- 84 and climate will impact future water supplies, demand, and quality;
- 85 (xxii) state water planning, including the formation of the state water plan as
- 86 provided in Section 73-10-15;
- 87 (xxiii) water reuse where appropriate for the region in which the water reuse occurs;
- 88 [~~(xxi)~~] (xxiv) water laws, rules, and enforcement that are consistent with this
- 89 Subsection (1) and encourage transparency, order, and certainty in the use of
- 90 public water;
- 91 [~~(xxii)~~] (xxv) the support and funding of research, science, and technology necessary
- 92 to achieve the provisions of this Subsection (1); and
- 93 [~~(xxiii)~~] (xxvi) the collaboration, cooperation, and engagement of stakeholders in the
- 94 identification and advancement of actions that support the provisions of this
- 95 Subsection (1); and
- 96 (c) Utah supports the timely and appropriate negotiated settlement of federally reserved
- 97 water right claims for both Native American trust lands and other existing federal
- 98 reservations, and opposes any future designation of public lands that does not
- 99 quantify any associated federally reserved water rights.

- 100 (2) State agencies are encouraged to conduct agency activities consistent with Subsection
101 (1) and implement policies established by the Legislature that promote the near- and
102 long-term stewardship of water quality and water resources.
- 103 (3) This section does not create a cause of action against the state's or a state agency's action
104 that is inconsistent with Subsection (1) and does not waive governmental immunity
105 under Title 63G, Chapter 7, Governmental Immunity Act of Utah.
- 106 (4) The Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee shall review
107 the state water policy annually and recommend priority balancing and any other changes
108 to the Legislature.

109 Section 2. **Effective date.**

110 This bill takes effect on May 7, 2025.