



# Grand Water & Sewer Service Agency

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**October 14, 2024**

President Dan Pyatt  
Grand County Water Conservancy District Board  
3025 East Spanish Trail Road  
Moab, UT 84532  
435-259-8121

Sen. David P. Hinkins, Chair  
Rep. Casey Snider, Chair  
The Utah Legislative Water Development Commission  
350 North State, Suite 350  
Salt Lake City, UT, 84114

Dear Commission Members,

The Grand County Water Conservancy District (GCWCD) Board thank you for inviting us in May to explain our plans to acquire the Moab Uranium Mill Tailings Removal Project (UMTRA) Green River pipeline when it becomes available and how it can provide water security to rural communities in Grand County.

The GCWCD owns 652-acre feet of water rights in the Green River that currently is inaccessible for the use of our customers. The UMTRA pipeline will enable us to utilize water from those rights in the Green River and transport it to Thompson Springs and Crescent Junction, where 40 families and 15 businesses face water shortages due to intermittent spring flows and aging infrastructure. A leak-resistant holding reservoir at Crescent Junction, built as part of the DOE delivery system, will hold an ample water supply for times of heavy water use. A truck stop concept is being developed at Crescent Junction which has requested a "Will Serve" letter from Grand Water & Sewer Service Agency (GWSSA). They would initially haul water from Moab to the site in tanker trucks. In the future they could connect to the system we plan to develop. This area offers great potential having two interchanges on I-70 and a multiple-mile long railroad siding on Union Pacific tracks. Grand County could also extend the water line to support the business park established by Grand County at the Canyonlands Regional Airport, which needs a reliable water source for growth.

GWSSA obtained documentation and specifications of the pipeline system through Freedom of Information Act requests. GWSSA is currently analyzing these records, which document operating procedures, maintenance costs, and rights of way information in order to provide a seamless transition if the system is successfully acquired by GWSSA and GCWCD.

Thank you again for listening to our plans in your May meeting to improve the water security of Grand County.

We at GWSSA would like to also make you aware of another big endeavor as it is seeking grant funding from The Upper Colorado River Basin System Conservation and Efficiency Program. If successful, the Bureau of Reclamation will provide 100% of the money for a project to install a diversion point on the Colorado River on Utah State Natural Resources land, known as the Scott Matheson Preserve. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources has given verbal support to our grant because it will provide recharge to their work in the Matheson Preserve.

This project will be phase one to enable the beneficial use of water provided by 2500 acre-feet of water rights acquired more than sixty years ago.

This diversion project aims to immediately benefit the Matheson Wetlands drought-affected ecosystems by establishing a connection to the Colorado River. The inlet to this diversion structure will be bored under the riverbed into the alluvial gravels existing there. The inlet will not impede any use of the river channel because it will be deep-seated in the riverbed. Water will collect in horizontally drilled well casings and flow to a stilling-well established away from the river where it can be drawn into pumps. This diversion structure will provide a tool for managers to maintain water levels in the Matheson Wetlands, reduce stream erosion, and improve water quality.

**Key Project Objectives:**

1. **Connectivity of Ecosystems:** The diversion will enable freshwater inundation in the wetlands when preserve managers deem necessary. Channeling freshwater to critical areas will support current and historic wildlife habitats. Water travels through the wetlands quickly and returns to the Colorado River. Except for water lost to evaporation, diverting water into the wetlands is a “non-consumptive” use.
2. **Water Quality Improvement:** Allowing inundation from the Colorado River could help suppress harmful brine from invading the ecosystem from salt deposits below the wetlands' substrates.
3. **Improve Vegetation Health:** Maintaining a healthy layer of water in the wetlands will improve the strength and fitness of native vegetation. Suppressing brine intrusion will reduce salt discharge from the wetlands into the Colorado River.

GWSSA envisions building this diversion structure as part of a larger initiative to use water from the Colorado River to support Moab and Spanish Valley residents. The project will enable establishing a valley-wide irrigation system, including Moab City. The most effective way to conserve groundwater levels in our complex system of aquifers is to replace culinary water being used for irrigation. Glen Canyon Deep Aquifer water being used for irrigation will be conserved for the best use of future generations. The initial phase of the broader project focuses on the diversion infrastructure enabling the flooding of the Matheson Wetlands, with future phases aimed at transporting water to the upper Spanish Valley, including Ken’s Lake.

Cooperation between neighbors will benefit all residents in Spanish Valley. San Juan and Grand Counties have plans to cooperate to develop policy and a water system that will benefit both counties. San Juan County owns its own water rights in the Colorado River and needs a system to deliver its water to its distribution system. Cooperation will ease the burden on both counties to secure their water future. John Westley Powell advocated a system transcending artificial land divisions and admonished neighbors to cooperate within watersheds. A diversion structure on the Colorado River can be the first phase of a project that will benefit everyone.

Would you please consider writing a resolution to support our grant request to the Upper Colorado River Basin System Conservation and Efficiency Program

Sincerely,



Dan Pyatt, President

**–BOARDS AND COMMITTEES–**

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**Agency Manager: Ben Musselman**