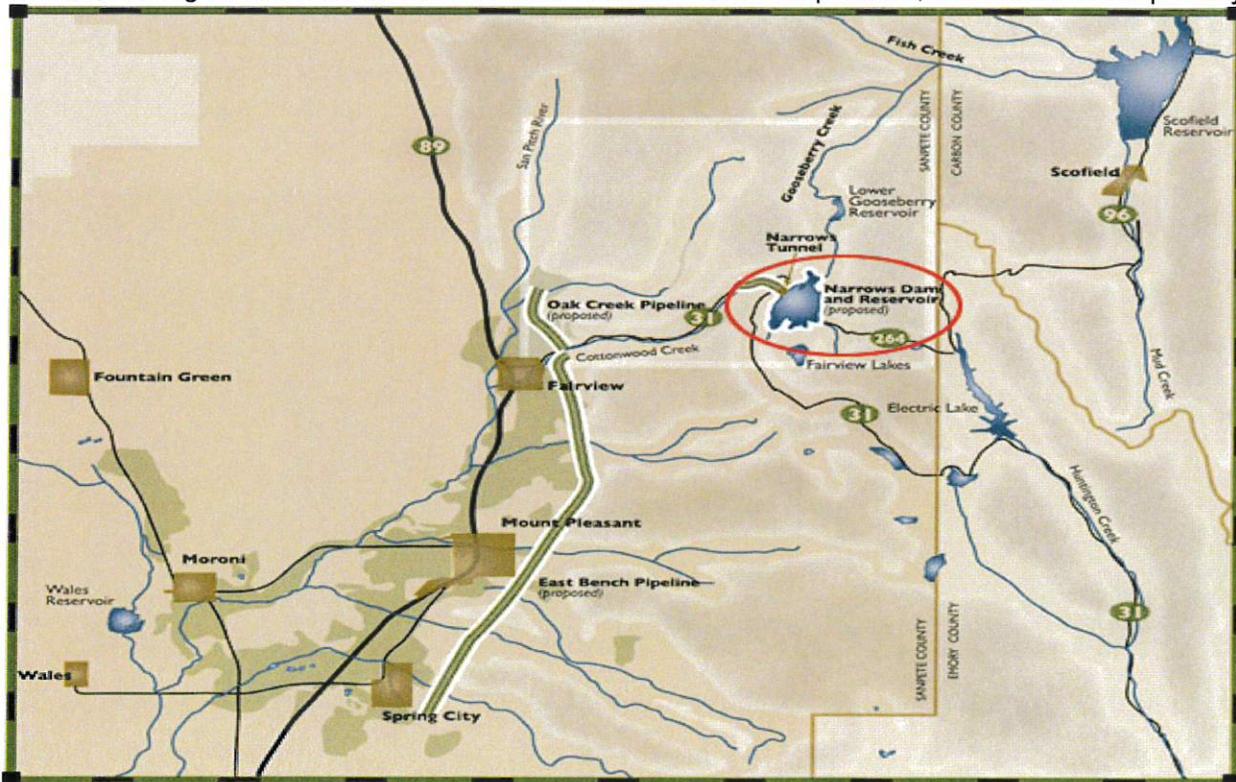


## SB 209 3RD SUB. GOOSEBERRY NARROWS STATE PARK STUDY THE REST OF THE STORY

Representatives from Sanpete County have introduced SB 209 (3<sup>rd</sup> Sub.), which would fund a study for the creation of a state park in an area known as Gooseberry Narrows, a tributary to Scofield Reservoir in the Price River drainage in central Utah. The true objective of the study is to create a “back door” for the state to fund the construction of the Gooseberry Narrows Reservoir (GNR), a project pursued for decades by the Sanpete Water Conservancy District (SWCD). Approximately 89% of the water collected in GNR would be used to grow a single additional crop of alfalfa each year. In Sanpete County.

More than a decade ago, the Bureau of Reclamation released an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) on GNR.<sup>1</sup> The Bureau agreed to license the use of 304.5 acres of federal land for GNR but declined to fund the reservoir. SWCD is unable to fund GNR, and hopes to use SB 209 to have the taxpayers of Utah pay the bill. The total cost for GNR could easily exceed \$70 million due, in part, to the extensive mitigation required for losses of wetlands and decreased flows in the Price River drainage which would damage or destroy more than 20 miles of rainbow and cutthroat trout spawning habitat in a blue-ribbon fishery. It would also degrade Scofield Reservoir, Utah’s second most popular fishery, by decreasing inflows by an average of 20% and up to 50% during drought years. In recent years Scofield has been plagued by harmful algal blooms, making its water unsafe to recreate in or drink—a serious problem, as Scofield is the primary



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.usbr.gov/uc/envdocs/eis/narrows/FinalEIS/ROD.pdf>

<sup>1</sup> Utah DEQ's warnings on algal blooms in Scofield Reservoir can be found at <https://deq.utah.gov/health-advisory-panel/scofield-reservoir-recreational-monitoring>.

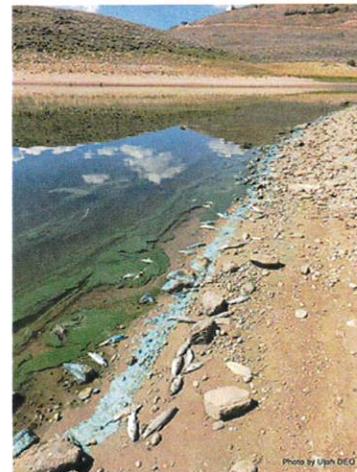
drinking water source for Carbon County, and treating the water for algae is both expensive and difficult.<sup>2</sup> Also, using tax dollars to endanger the existing popular state park at Scofield, which had more than 43,000 visitors last year, makes little sense.

GNR would also require a significant transbasin diversion of water out of Utah's Colorado River drainage. Recently, Utah initiated the Demand Management Pilot Program, which pays farmers in the Colorado River drainage to voluntarily reduce their water use in an effort to stave off curtailment of junior water rights which serve the Wasatch Front. Constructing GNR would create a situation where taxpayers in Utah are paying both for farmers in Sanpete County to be able to harvest an additional crop of alfalfa, and for farmers in the Colorado River basin to not harvest any alfalfa. Paying to both conserve and deplete water from the same drainage is unwise water management and a waste of public funds.

If state funds are going to be used to study GNR, the study should take into consideration the extensive studies already found in the EIS and ROD. Currently, SB 209 will only study:

*"(i) any necessary requirement for the development or construction of a dam and reservoir in the gooseberry narrows; (ii) the expected cost to the state of: (A) transferring, exchanging, or purchasing all federally managed lands in the gooseberry narrows; (B) constructing and developing infrastructure needed for a state park in the gooseberry narrows; and (C) constructing and developing a dam and reservoir in the gooseberry narrows[.]"*<sup>3</sup>

A complete and fair study should also include an evaluation of the broader social and economic impacts of GNR, as well as an updated analysis of GNR's hydrologic impacts on Scofield Reservoir and State Park taking into account the severe drought gripping Utah and the current negotiations on the future of the availability of Colorado River water in Utah.



**PLEASE VOTE TO REJECT OR AMEND SB 209 3<sup>rd</sup> Sub.**

**Scofield Reservoir Algal Bloom**



<sup>3</sup> SB 209 3<sup>rd</sup> Sub., Lines 29-36.