

1 **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO ADDRESS DECLINING**
2 **WATER LEVELS OF THE GREAT SALT LAKE**

3 2019 GENERAL SESSION

4 STATE OF UTAH

5 **Chief Sponsor: Timothy D. Hawkes**

6 Senate Sponsor: Scott D. Sandall

8 **LONG TITLE**

9 **General Description:**

10 This concurrent resolution recognizes the critical importance of continued water flows
11 to Great Salt Lake and its wetlands and the need for solutions to address declining water
12 levels, while appropriately balancing economic, social, and environmental needs.

13 **Highlighted Provisions:**

14 This resolution:

- 15 ▶ urges expeditious and collaborative development of recommendations for policy
- 16 and actionable solutions to avert economic, social, and environmental harm due to
- 17 declining water levels at Great Salt Lake and its wetlands; and
- 18 ▶ encourages reports to the Legislature and Governor.

19 **Special Clauses:**

20 None

22 *Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:*

23 WHEREAS, in 2014 the Utah Legislature recognized the "economic, recreational, and
24 natural significance of the Great Salt Lake" pursuant to enrolled H.J.R. 20, Joint Resolution
25 Recognizing the Significance of the Great Salt Lake (General Session 2014);

26 WHEREAS, Great Salt Lake, the largest saline lake in the Western Hemisphere, is a
27 symbol of our state, an economic driver, and a unique and complex ecosystem of regional,
28 international, and hemispherical importance;

29 WHEREAS, Great Salt Lake and its wetlands support a range of economic activities,

30 accounting for a total regional economic output of more than \$1.3 billion annually from
31 mineral extraction, brine shrimp harvesting, recreation, including hunting, birding, and boating,
32 and other uses;

33 WHEREAS, Great Salt Lake and its wetlands are recognized as hemispherically and
34 globally important habitat for millions of waterbirds, waterfowl, and shorebirds;

35 WHEREAS, Great Salt Lake is home to three state parks, five state waterfowl
36 management areas, a national bird refuge, and private preserves and duck clubs;

37 WHEREAS, the "lake effect" from Great Salt Lake provides an important contribution
38 to snowpack in the Wasatch Range, which is crucially important to Utah's water cycle and its
39 tourism, agricultural, and other industries;

40 WHEREAS, many state, local, and federal entities have responsibilities relating to the
41 management and preservation of Great Salt Lake, its wetlands, wildlife, or communities that
42 rely on the lake's many resources;

43 WHEREAS, the Great Salt Lake Advisory Council was established in 2010 to advise
44 Utah administrative and legislative bodies on the sustainable use, protection, and development
45 of Great Salt Lake;

46 WHEREAS, water levels at Great Salt Lake and its wetlands can fluctuate naturally,
47 however, the lake is currently on a sustained, downward trend having lost significant volume
48 and substantial river inflow over the past 150 years, leaving large areas of exposed lakebed;

49 WHEREAS, the current trajectory suggests there is a real and near-term risk of
50 significant and irreversible impacts to the health of Great Salt Lake and its wetlands, which
51 also poses a threat to Utah's economy, public health and welfare, air quality, environmental
52 resources, and the ability to provide water to meet Utah's growing economy;

53 WHEREAS, other states or communities with closed basin lakes that have experienced
54 excessive drying, have witnessed dire outcomes and have incurred enormous costs and public
55 health, environmental and other economic effects;

56 WHEREAS, Great Salt Lake and its ecosystem could face a similar fate due to historic
57 water management practices, diversions, drought and variable climatic conditions; and

58 WHEREAS, by taking steps now, Utah will be best-positioned to avoid the kind of
59 degradation and economic harm experienced by other states or communities:

60 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the
61 Governor concurring therein, recognize the critical importance of ensuring adequate water
62 flows to Great Salt Lake and its wetlands, to maintain a healthy and sustainable lake system.

63 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor recognize there is
64 a need for an overall policy that supports effective administration of water flow to Great Salt
65 Lake to maintain or increase lake levels, while appropriately balancing economic, social, and
66 environmental needs, including the need to sustain working agricultural land.

67 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor encourage the
68 Departments of Natural Resources and Environmental Quality through their relevant divisions
69 to expeditiously, jointly, and collaboratively engage with a wide-range of stakeholders to
70 develop recommendations for policy and other solutions to ensure adequate water flows to
71 Great Salt Lake and its wetlands.

72 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor encourage the
73 presentation of findings, conclusions, and recommendations to the Legislature and Governor,
74 including encouraging a report of progress in achieving the objectives of this resolution to the
75 Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee by no later than
76 November 30, 2020.

77 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Utah
78 Department of Natural Resources, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, the Great
79 Salt Lake Advisory Council, and all municipalities and counties bordering Great Salt Lake or
80 within the Great Salt Lake watershed.