

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

2019 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

**Chief Sponsor: Timothy D. Hawkes**

Senate Sponsor: Scott D. Sandall

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**LONG TITLE**

**General Description:**

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

**Highlighted Provisions:**

This resolution:

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

**Special Clauses:**

None

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

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

WHEREAS, Great Salt Lake, the largest saline lake in the Western Hemisphere, is a 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 industry;

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 very 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 a  
57 combination of historic and current water management practices and diversions, drought and  
58 variable climatic conditions; and

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

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

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

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

73 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor encourage the  
74 presentation of findings, conclusions, and recommendations to the Legislature and Governor.

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