**ULA Work Session**

Thursday, August 14, 2023, A.M.

in the Provo Airport, 1331 Sky Way, Provo, UT 84601

**ATTENDEES:**

Julie Fullmer, Vineyard, Chair

Eric Ellis, Utah Lake Authority

Curtis Blair, UV Chamber

John Mackey, DWQ

Jamie Barnes, FFSL

Hilary Hungerford, UVU

Mark Johnson, Lehi

Carolyn Lundberg, Lindon

Brian Torgerson, Provo

Chris Carn, Saratoga Springs

Lisa Shepherd, Utah County

John Mackey, DWQ

Kamron Dalton, GO UTAH

Terry Peterson, Orem

**VISITORS:**

Congressman Burgess Owens

Jodi Garberg

Josh Hermann

Kaye Nelson

Scott Daly

Teri Harman

Renn Lambert

Sarah

J

Ryan Van Goethem

John Bennion

Casey Saxton

Wayne Bradshaw

David Rowley

**WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER:**

Chair Julie Fullmer opened the work session.

Eric Ellis aimed to summarize various issues and programs related to Utah Lake. He encouraged the attendees, including Congressman Owen, to actively participate in the discussion. The goal was to foster a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities surrounding Utah Lake, focusing on potential federal partnerships, particularly in education, water programs, and transportation.

Congressman Burgess Owens expressed his excitement about the potential of Utah Lake and commended the innovative team working on its development. He highlighted his commitment to realizing the lake's full potential and expressed gratitude for the engagement of those involved in the project.

ECOSYSTEM

Eric Ellis discussed the new Utah Lake Management Authority plan, which is divided into three main topics: ecosystem, recreation, and community. They focus on water quality in the ecosystem category and have partnered with the Division of Water Quality for a water quality study. The main goal is to reduce nutrient levels in Utah Lake to support beneficial uses, including recreation and aquatic life. They are also working on strategies to address non-point sources of nutrients. Algae blooms are a concern during the summer, and treatments are scheduled for Utah Lake State Park and Linden Marina to target areas where people interact with the water. Long-term solutions for nutrient reduction are being explored.

He answered a question about funds. The funds for the treatments primarily come from the state at the moment. They have focused on treating isolated locations where people swim. However, they are exploring the possibility of larger-scale solutions to address water quality issues, such as stabilizing the lake to prevent nutrient upwelling. He also discussed the efforts to reduce invasive species, specifically phragmites, along the lake's shoreline, with significant progress made in reducing their presence over the years through ongoing treatments.

He continued that the treatment to remove phragmites involves several steps. First, the herbicide is applied with a helicopter to kill the plants. After the phragmites have died, marsh masters, which are amphibious machines, are used to mow down the vegetation. This process targets both the above-ground seed heads and the roots of the plants. Currently, the efforts are state-funded and do not have a federal nexus. However, there is potential to change the conversation to focus on water mitigation and its impact on various species, which might garner more federal support.

The discussion highlighted the significant impact of invasive species like fragments on the habitat for migratory birds, especially regarding nesting areas. Additionally, mosquitoes have become a growing concern, potentially due to the phragmites problem. The need for attention and support from both state and federal levels is recognized. Combating invasive species has involved various strategies, including using machines, drones, and precision treatments. Progress has been made in reducing phragmites along the shoreline, with a 70% reduction observed over the years. The June Sucker program has also made strides in improving habitat conditions and achieving the downlisting of the species from the endangered list. Completing the Provo River Delta Restoration project is a positive development for multiple fish species and recreation.

Eric Ellis addressed the issue of northern pike illegally introduced into the lake, posing a threat to the June Sucker population and requiring management measures.

HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM

Next, they discussed the importance of a healthy ecosystem with an established shoreline and submerged aquatic vegetation. It emphasizes that a balanced ecosystem allows predatory and desirable fish to thrive. The need for reestablishing vegetation to provide habitat is highlighted.

Furthermore, the conversation mentioned challenges related to public access to Utah Lake, particularly due to its shallow nature and fluctuating water levels. It suggests that focused dredging in marinas and areas with high nutrient concentrations could improve water quality and access for boaters.

They touched on the success of securing legislative support for Utah Lake, with significant investments in access enhancements and marina upgrades. It mentions the installation of a marina camera network to help people choose less busy marinas and monitor traffic patterns. Additionally, the conversation highlights the expansion and investment in the South Marina in Saratoga Springs, with a total investment of around $5 million.

NORTH MARINA PROJECT

Eric Ellis noted the presence of the South Marina, which has been there for some time, and the new North Marina, which is currently under development. The North Marina project is progressing well; aerial images and renderings show its potential layout and appearance. The North Marina is expected to be a significant addition to the area, potentially drawing visitors from Salt Lake County due to its location at the north end of the lake.

The project is currently funded with approximately $2.3 million, with an additional $2.5 million in funding being worked on. The project is estimated to cost between $30 to $40 million. The funding comes from a combination of Saratoga Springs-based funding and grants from other agencies.

ACCESS POINTS

The conversation discusses various projects to improve access points around the lake, focusing on enhancing 17 out of 27 access points. The potential for motorboat access or sportsman's access programs to support these projects is mentioned. Many of these access points have the potential for major improvements to create beautiful and functional areas.

VINEYARD CITY CENTER AND PROMENADE

The conversation also mentions a partnership with Vineyard City to develop a city center with a promenade leading from the UTA tracks or FrontRunner station to the lakeshore. This project aims to create a unique and engaging area near the lake, with a current model illustrating the concept, including a dense city center transitioning to natural open space as one moves south.

Julie Fullmer discussed various aspects of the project, including invasive species mitigation using methods like marsh management and grazing with cows or goats. There's also a focus on water quality mitigation at the old Geneva site, particularly in the North Marina area. The conversation emphasizes the need to balance economic development with conservation efforts, coordination involving the Army Corps, transportation lines, and potential connections to the city center.

LINDON CITY PARK/GENEVA RESORT

Eric Ellis discussed a project involving Lindon City, located north of Vineyard. Behind the existing marina is a piece of land with historical significance related to the Geneva Resort. Lindon City is working on a park plan for this area to improve the trail and connect it to the Lake Shore trail to the north. They are partnering with Timpanogos Special Service District to move this project forward, and permitting is nearing completion. Work on this project is expected to begin in the next year or so.

Mayor Carolyn Lundberg noted that the focus of the discussion was the conservation education park, which held historical significance dating back to pioneer times. In the past, this area served as a stop for pioneers traveling by railroad to a resort with a hotel, dance hall, and a giant slide. The goal was to restore some historical elements, including signage and a pavilion while connecting the existing shoreline trail with Vineyard's developments and the Lindon Heritage Trail, which runs from the mountains to the shoreline. Efforts were made to secure a pedestrian or bicycle path crossing a rail spur to complete the trail connection, enhancing access to the marina and the lake for residents and visitors alike. The permitting would be costly. Coordination with various stakeholders, including Union Pacific, was ongoing to address this regional issue.

The group discussed the reasons for the permitting being delayed.

Congressman Burgess wanted to stay informed and supported something being done to move the project forward.

OPEN SPACE SOUTH OF VINEYARD CITY

Eric Ellis discussed a project involving a large open space park in the southern part of Vineyard City. The Bureau of Reclamation was in the process of a land swap to simplify trail permitting and transform the area into an open space park. The park aimed to support bird nesting and habitat, featuring meadows and wetlands, with trails connecting to Orem and Provo. It was designed to preserve the natural environment, offer bird refuge and hunting opportunities, provide active transportation through trails to the UTA front-runner station, and connect to the Lake Shore Trail, part of a broader plan for a 75 to 100-mile trail system around Utah Lake, with trail locations varying based on the lake's terrain.

Congressman Burgess is inquiring about the eligibility of the Federal nexus for the community project fund. He's seeking clarification on whether it would automatically be included or if they need to assess the accounts for eligibility. This question arises because earmarks for community projects have been reintroduced recently, and the account criteria may have changed since then.

VINEYARD SHORELINE AND MURDOCK CANAL TRAILS

Eric Ellis discussed the importance of completing the Vineyard Shoreline Trail and the Murdoch Canal Trail for usability. He emphasized the expectation of high trail usage, making it a valuable alternative transportation route for valley residents. They mentioned a federal grant for the top left section in Saratoga, which was supplemented by a state land grant but faced challenges, including contractor bankruptcy. He mentioned that the two sections they were working on would complete 11.5 miles of shoreline trail, with about a mile and a half still needing improvement. The plan was initially to pave it, but they encountered issues with the wall's security, leading to additional work. Ultimately, this work aimed to finish the 11.5-mile trail.

NATURE CENTER

Eric Ellis noted a research and nature center that was planned in the past. This center had a dual purpose, serving as the office for the Utah County fire warden and offering garage space. It was intended to enhance field trips for students by allowing the fire warden to educate them about water systems and their impact on fires. Local researchers, including those from UVU and Utah State University, were eager to partner on this research center, including wet and dry labs for conducting studies. The proposal sought education funding and had a water quality nexus. They planned to request funding from the upcoming legislative session and were open to federal partnership opportunities.

Congressman Burgess expressed interest in education for higher education and suggested discussing it.

Eric Ellis mentioned the possibility of tying education-related legislation to a Utah Lake Nature Center program, like the one allowing donation tax credits. This could provide a clear path for donors to receive tax benefits. They were open to exploring various possibilities for collaboration in the past.

The group discussed an underway marina project that had received about 5 million in funding. The marina was next to another facility and would share parking and boat launching ramps.

Congressman Burgess inquired about the project's timeline.

Eric Ellis mentioned that it could progress quickly once the necessary funding was secured. Some initial site evaluation and feasibility studies had been conducted, and they had a general design in mind. The group also discussed the involvement of the Hutchings Museum, although it wasn't an official partner for this project. However, they anticipated collaborating on educational aspects, such as citizen scientist programs and identified various partnership opportunities.

WATER SAFETY

Eric Ellis discussed past efforts to improve water safety on Utah Lake by installing wind stations on the north and west sides of the lake. These stations provided data for the Windy Lookout app, offering boaters a 30-minute alert before windstorms hit. He also mentioned a life jacket loaner program at major marina access points, where volunteers ensured that donated life jackets were available. This program was initiated in response to a tragic incident where individuals without life jackets got caught in a windstorm.

Additionally, he highlighted the collaboration with partners, including the Utah Lake Commission, which had been operational for 16 years, and its purpose was to unify communities around the lake. The Utah Lake Authority continued this work with better funding and state support, enabling them to undertake projects to improve water quality and access on the vast Utah Lake, which covered 150 square miles. Increased funding allowed for more significant enhancements and projects on the lake.

UTAH LAKE WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Director Mackey discussed past funding programs, including $30 million in ARPA funding focusing on watershed issues that benefited communities around Utah Lake. Most of the funds, about $26 million, were allocated to capital infrastructure projects, primarily wastewater treatment facilities. The remaining funds were used for projects related to non-point source pollution, agriculture initiatives (like virtual fencing), and education.

Julie Fullmer mentioned receiving an additional $5 million from the state, which was used to acquire wetland areas for land banking. However, due to the extensive needs around the lake, this funding was insufficient to address all necessary improvements. They emphasized the importance of seeking additional funding resources to complete their management plan and enhance public access to the lake.

Eric Ellis discussed the progress made by the Utah Lake Authority in developing a management plan for Utah Lake. The conceptual stage of the plan had been completed, and the final plan was about to be rolled out. This plan identified numerous projects that needed funding, and while they lacked sufficient resources to complete all of them, they were looking to tap into various programs to achieve measurable results. He emphasized the importance of improving public perception of Utah Lake, which historically had faced challenges due to water quality issues. They engaged in various outreach efforts, including fourth-grade field trips, an annual photo contest, and scavenger hunts to highlight the lake's beauty and potential. They also collaborated with partners like the Hutchings Museum, Utah Valley Explore, and the June Sucker program to enhance the lake's image and utilize its potential as a treasure. Additionally, they had developed a new logo for the Lake Authority and were working with an ad firm to implement ideas for improving public perception.

The group watched a short campaign video titled "Utah Lake is My Lake."

Eric Ellis mentioned an impactful campaign they had organized in the past, where they interviewed individuals and released clips during the summertime. This campaign aimed to change the perception of Utah Lake, which had historically been associated with negative qualities like being stinky, murky, and dirty. Changing this perception was a gradual process, and they had seen progress, albeit challenging to change an entire generation's perception of the lake. He concluded by suggesting a discussion about ways Congressman Burgess's connection or interest in the lake could further their efforts in the future.

Director Mackey explained that they observed changes in Utah Lake's ecosystem, shifting from a macro-based ecosystem to an algae-based one. They conducted microcosm studies on algae, finding that nutrient management could improve the situation. They were almost done with mass balance studies examining nutrient cycling, which showed promising results for a rapid recovery under improved nutrient conditions, possibly within 1 to 3 years.

He emphasized the importance of addressing nutrients and controlling carp, which stir up sediments and prevent light penetration, hindering the growth of submerged vegetation. The strategies of reducing point source loads, managing stormwater, and restoring habitat were essential for effective lake management.

Director Mackey stressed the importance of collaboration with the Utah Lake Authority and the need to maintain the organization's strength and momentum as it represents all the lake's interests and the engaged public. He highlighted the critical timing for continued efforts and maintaining organizational structure and momentum.

Julie Fullmer opened the floor for questions, comments, and ideas regarding what the participants were working on, current activities, future aspirations, and what they hoped Congressman Owens could support.

Curtis Blair emphasized the importance of exploring synergies and mutual support, considering Congressman Owens' influential committee roles and discussing effective collaboration. They sought suggestions on how to enhance their partnership.

Congressman Burgess expressed his gratitude for the current team and their shared vision. He emphasized the importance of collaboration, communication and how their community can fit into various initiatives. He also highlighted his role on the Education Infrastructure Committee and the opportunity to develop a vision for Utah, positioning the state as an example of innovation and collaboration for the rest of the country.

Mayor Fullmer highlighted the importance of sharing information about their respective initiatives and projects related to water infrastructure investment. She suggested that each entity could provide updates on their work and potentially seek support or collaboration. Mayor Fullmer also mentioned the significance of reclamation plants and their impact on nutrient levels, affecting various aspects like land use, road infrastructure, and wildlife management. She emphasized the potential for collaboration among the various entities to create a comprehensive list of projects and goals.

The group discussed potential collaboration and the need to coordinate their efforts effectively.

Congressman Burgess emphasized the importance of working together to address concerns related to the environment, such as nutrient management and the impact on wildlife. He highlighted the opportunity to focus on these issues and make a significant impact locally and as a model for others.

Devon Murphy encouraged the group to communicate their community project funding requests and identified accounts they could tap into, emphasizing the need to start early to secure federal funding.

Congressman Burgess and others emphasized the importance of acting quickly due to the limited time window for grant submissions. Devon Murphy also mentioned their willingness to provide grant support and collaborate across the congressional delegation to advance community projects.

The group discussed the advantages of collaboration and the benefits to the community, including tourism and infrastructure improvements. There was a question about whether the Utah Lake Authority (ULA) or individual cities should make funding requests, to which the response was that it depends on the nature of the request and the specific account. They agreed to contact the congressional office to determine which accounts would suit their project ideas.

Congressman Burgess highlighted the success of previous water-related funding requests and emphasized the importance of proactively addressing the issues specific to their region.

Mayor Lundberg inquired about Utah's success in securing appropriations and whether there was room for improvement compared to other states.

Congressman Burgess explained that the community project funding request process allows them to allocate a small percentage of discretionary spending (1% or half a percent) to specific projects. He also emphasized the importance of encouraging Senators to participate in the process.

Devon Murphy mentioned that Utah's House delegation had successfully accepted their requests, with 14 out of 15 requests approved. She clarified that each congressional office could submit up to 15 total requests.

Congressman Burgess expressed the importance of pursuing impactful projects while avoiding unrelated or "crazy" ideas. He encouraged the group to continue their efforts and present them positively.

When asked about ties to the Great Salt Lake Recovery efforts, Eric Ellis explained that while they are not directly connected in funding, there is a clear connection regarding watershed and water quality, with actions in Utah Lake potentially benefiting the Great Salt Lake.

Kameron Dalton highlighted the direct connection between eliminating frag mites and water preservation in Utah Lake, which ultimately impacts the water flow into the Great Salt Lake. He emphasized the potential to connect various projects to statewide and national water-related initiatives, including preserving water rights and setting aside watershed preservation areas, focusing on migratory patterns across the Great Salt Lake.

Hilary Hungerford expressed excitement about Congressman Burgess being on the education committee and highlighted how UVU uses Utah Lake as a laboratory for research. She mentioned the impact of Utah Lake on the workforce, with many students staying in Utah after graduation. Congressman Burgess acknowledged the importance of education and workforce development related to the lake and expressed enthusiasm for the opportunities for research and education there.

Curtis Blair expressed gratitude for serving on the board. He emphasized making Utah Lake a destination that conserves its heritage and values while supporting commerce and community development. He welcomed Congressman Burgess's involvement in navigating challenges and funding opportunities, highlighting the potential for Utah Lake to enhance the character and quality of the county.

Congressman Burgess appreciated the collaboration and innovation he witnessed in the meeting. He acknowledged the exciting potential for Utah Lake to become a prominent destination in the state in the coming years. He and his staff had to leave and asked for a photo with the board.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

\*Due to a miscommunication, ULA staff ended the online portion of the meeting when the photo was taken. As soon as the mistake was realized, the meeting was restarted, however no one joined. Chair Fullmer explained what had happened. There wa one online comment that had been sent in the chat before the meeting disconnected that Sam Braegger read aloud.

An online comment by J: While the lake benefits from the improvements mentioned today, in what ways will local and state officials open doors for local businesses to help bring commerce and recreation to you?

\**After the meeting, efforts were made to contact those who attended the online meeting and offered the chance to make a public comment via email to ULA staff to be shared with the board before the next meeting. Only one comment was submitted via email, by Sarah Graham, included here:*

My name is Sarah Graham. Provo is my hometown and where I currently live. I love Utah Lake and have been learning more about it, volunteering with the Provo River Delta Project and Conserve Utah Valley and getting to know members of the Timpanogos Nation, some of whose ancestors knew some of mine.

Back in May, I submitted a public comment requesting that the ULA board ‘regularly include at least one representative of the Timpanogos Nation in their decision-making.’ As you may know, it is a fact well-documented in historical sources such as the 1776 Dominguez-Escalante expedition that the people indigenous to this area called themselves and were known as the Timpanogos, and that the lake was originally called Timpanogos Lake.

Executive Director Ellis responded: 'The membership of the ULA Board is determined by the Legislature, not the current Board of Directors; as such, it would take legislative action to adjust the makeup of the ULA Board.' I have contacted my legislative representatives and would like to reiterate my comment.

I have personally seen how hard Mary Meyer and other representatives of the Timpanogos Nation have been working to educate the public on their traditional ecological knowledge and wisdom at UVU, BYU and other forums in this valley.

As a city, county and state, I think we should be proud of this rich and unique cultural heritage and the long-term perspective handed down by the Timpanogos people from generation to generation, despite the near-annihilation of genocide they continue to survive.

I am happy to see that the ULA recently hired a conservation biologist to inform their decisions. I strongly believe we should also include a representative of the Timpanogos Nation in decision making surrounding the lake on a meaningful, regular basis, preferably as a permanent board member. This would further contribute to the model we provide to other places across the country, which Congressman Owens mentioned today at the meeting.

You can reach the Timpanogos Nation using the email listed on their website, https://timpanogostribe.com/: TimpanogosTribe@gmail.com

I am confused why the public comments were not announced and held as scheduled on the agenda. I took time out of my full-time work to be there for the last hour of the meeting, which already is scheduled during the time most people work. As a citizen, I expect public participation to be transparent and accessible.

Thank you for your time and attention,

Sarah Graham

Provo, UT 84606

Curtis Blair emphasized the need to balance conservation efforts and allow businesses and entrepreneurs to engage with the lake. He mentioned that there seems to be a waiting period for signals of support and endorsement from the community, including ULA, city councils, and mayors. He suggested that broadcasting a message encouraging businesses and entrepreneurs to participate in lake-related ventures could help stimulate growth while being sensitive to conservation efforts.

Mayor Fullmer discussed the importance of enhancing access points to the lake to promote business and community interaction.

Curtis Blair emphasized the need for stewardship, accountability, and balance when allowing businesses to engage with the lake. There was also a mention of exploring strategies to unite the community and make Utah Lake a destination.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made by Terry Peterson. Chris Carn seconded the motion.