

**MOAB WATER CONSERVATION AND DROUGHT MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD**  
**MINUTES**  
**SPECIAL MEETING**  
**October 16, 2017**

**Special Meeting & Attendance:** The Moab Water Conservation and Drought Management Advisory Board held a Special Meeting on the above date at the Moab Valley Inn, located at 911 South Main Street, Moab, Utah. The purpose of the meeting was the Southeastern Utah Water Workshop. In attendance were Board Members Kara Dohrenwend, Mike Duncan, Arne Hultquist, Sarah Sidwell, Jeremy Lynch and Kyle Bailey, Moab City Councilmembers Rani Derasary, Heila Ershadi and Bailey. Also in attendance were City Manager David Everitt, Sustainability Director Rosemarie Russo, Public Works Director Pat Dean, Assistant City Engineer Eric Johanson and Recorder Assistant Eve Tallman.

**Special Meeting Called to Order:** Sue Bellagamba, Canyonlands Regional Director of the Nature Conservancy, called the meeting to order at 9:33 AM.

Eris Millis, of the Utah Division of Water Rights, presented a history and structure of the Colorado River Compact. He explained that the 1922 compact apportions water to states in the Colorado River Basin, and this compact provides stability and certainty to stakeholders and allows flexibility to address new water needs for the future. He stated that in 1984, the Upper Colorado River Compact was founded, and these two compacts comprise the "Law of the River." He said Lees Ferry demarks the division of the Upper and Lower Colorado River Basins. Millis outlined the apportioned water rights to various states, tribes, and Mexico, which add up to 17.5 Million Acre Feet (MAF) "on paper." He then described the gauged flow of the river, thusly: up until 1921, the flow was gauged at 16.5 MAF, and through 2013 the flow was gauged at 12.5 MAF. He noted the long-term gauge record was 14.8 MAF and stated that the Upper Basin is using 4-5 MAF and the Lower Basin is using their full allotment. In the future, there will likely be new users, include the Navajo Nation, the Ute Tribe, new agricultural, municipal and industrial users and the Lake Powell Pipeline. Millis described the increase in invasive fish species, as well as the salinity control program.

The Upper Basin Plan, Millis reported, includes cloud seeding, moving water from reservoirs such as Flaming Gorge, and the facilitation of voluntary reductions in consumption. He noted that if the water levels can't be managed, there may be mandatory curtailment in the Upper Basin. He continued by saying that Lake Mead has required mandatory cutbacks in usage, and drought contingency efforts have been implemented.

Millis concluded with remarks about climate change, noting that there is a question about whether the lowering supply is caused by drought or climate change. He stated more reservoirs are needed, aquifer storage and recovery are important, and the diversity of water supply must be considered. He stated that the Law of the River is working, and all seven states plus Mexico are collaborating for the good of all.

Next, Eric Kuhn from the Colorado River District spoke. He described the water supply and usage of the Front Range, which draws heavily from the Western Slope for its water. He said that, as Front Range demand grows, agricultural water will be converted to culinary use. He stated conservation is key for Denver and surrounding areas, as it is key in Las Vegas. He noted that most of the water rights on the Western Slope of Colorado date to a time before the 1922 compact. Town of Castle Valley Mayor Dave

Erley asked about demand hardening, and it was explained that incentives in Las Vegas made it attractive for homeowners to remove their lawns. On the Front Range, water re-use is compelling for water customers.

Kent Jones, the State Engineer, introduced the Proposed Groundwater Management Plan for Moab/Spanish Valley. Jones outlined the purpose and position of the State Engineer and pointed out that his office is responsible for securing the measurement, distribution and appropriation of water, and regulates groundwater withdrawal. Jones stated the United States Geological Survey (USGS) completed their groundwater study of the annual volume of groundwater that recharges the aquifer. He stated most basins in Utah are full or over-appropriated and that most basins are closed to new water right applications. He said that Moab/Spanish Valley currently will approve small (6.73 AF) residential water rights and will also approve temporary permits for developments, temporary and permanent transfers, and the Division of Water Rights is open to change applications. He stated that currently more than 20,000 AF are allocated on paper and the current total use is 6,400 AF with a depletion rate of about 3,000 AF per year. He stated the recent USGS study shows a discharge of 10,000 to 13,000 AF. He said a future program for the Division in the Moab area is to adjudicate the water rights and close abandoned wells.

Jones described the legislation that provides for the creation of the groundwater management plan. Section 73-5-15 of the Utah Code seeks to limit withdrawals, and protect the physical integrity of the aquifer and protect water quality. He said the plan will determine safe yield and he reiterated that senior water rights prevail. He outlined the timeframe for the steps in developing the plan and indicated that, after public input in 2018, the plan would be revised or adopted in 2019. He outlined the USGS recommendations for next steps, including better monitoring of spring discharges, monitoring well levels, development of a numerical model and adding stream gauges on Mill Creek and Pack Creek.

John Weisheit asked if there would be sufficient funding from the State to do this work. Mike Duncan asked if localities fund the work. Dave Erley noted that some experts assert that climate change could deplete water supply by 30 percent, and with current usage in the Valley already at 6,400 to 6,900 AF, this puts the area at the limit of safe yield. Jones stated that he is not optimistic about the future of Moab's water supply and he is worried about that. An audience member suggested that climate change is already here; Jones stated it may get worse.

**Adjournment:** The morning session adjourned for lunch at 11:50 AM.