

Utah State Wetland Program Summary



Photo Title: Great Salt Lake Wetlands
Photo Credit: Utah Department of Environmental Quality

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Section A. Quick View

Description of State's Wetlands

Utah's wetlands include mud flat and salt flats, playas, depressional wetlands, potholes, riverine/riparian, wet meadows, wet lake meadows, subalpine/montane wetlands, and plunge pools. Depending on how one defines wetlands, the state also has many lakes that could be classified as wetlands under some classification systems.

State Definition of Wetlands

The Utah Pollutant Discharge Elimination System states that "'waters of the State' includes 'wetlands' as defined in the federal Clean Water Act."

Historic Wetland Loss/Gain

Original Wetland Acreage	Remaining Wetland Acreage	Acreage Lost	% Lost
802,000	558,000	244,000	30%

Source: US Fish and Wildlife Service (Dahl, 1989)

Primary State Wetlands Webpage

Utah Wetland Information Center
<http://geology.utah.gov/esp/wetlands/>

Utah Department of Environmental Quality – Wetland Program Website
<http://www.deq.utah.gov/ProgramsServices/programs/water/wetlands/index.htm>

State Wetland Program Plan

Utah's Wetland Program Plan (2011-2016)

http://www.deq.utah.gov/ProgramsServices/programs/water/wetlands/docs/2014/08Aug/UTAH_WPP_Version3_2013.pdf

No Net Loss/Net Gain Goal

The state has no formal policy of no net loss, but does have internal goals to achieve no net loss.

State Budget for Wetland Work (2014)

State Name	Core element #1: Regulation	Core Element #2: Monitoring and Assessment	Core Element #3: Wetland Water Quality Standards	Core Element #4: Voluntary Wetland Restoration
Agency	DWQ	DWQ	DWG	DWQ
Source(s)	Information unavailable	EPA Grants (state provides 25% match)	As part of the analytical work for the state's wetland water quality integrated report that supports standards development)	319 funds for wetland restoration work
Amount	Information unavailable	Information unavailable	Information unavailable	Information unavailable
Staffing	Information unavailable	Information unavailable	Information unavailable	Information unavailable
Agency		DNR Div. of Fire, Forestry and State Lands		DWR
Source		State Grants		For non-wetland-specific work on habitat treatment centered on species
Amount		Information unavailable		Information unavailable
Staffing		Information unavailable		Information unavailable
Agency		Fund for Endangered Species (landscape model, monitoring and wetland hydrology modeling)		DNR Div. of Fire, Forestry and State Lands (Invasive species management)
Source(s)		State Grants		

Amount		Information unavailable		Information unavailable
Staffing		Information unavailable		Information unavailable
Agency				Wildlife Habitat Account
Source(s)				Information unavailable
Amount				Information unavailable
Staffing				Information unavailable

Detail: The state does not provide any ongoing state funds for monitoring and assessment, the development of water quality standards. This work is funded on a project basis by grants and contracts, some of which are from the state or match for them is provided by the state. Restoration activities are funded by an array of sources (detailed above).

State Permitting Fees

State Permitting Fee	State Name
Yes/No	NO
Amount (range)	N/A
Agency	N/A

Innovative Features

Among the state’s innovations, DWQ is conducting some innovative work around the establishment of wetland water quality standards

Models and Templates

None

Section B. Regulation

How are Wetlands Regulated in Utah?

Utah’s regulation of wetlands is through the state’s §401 water quality certification program, which is administered by UDEQ. UDEQ staff relies on best professional judgment in reviewing for consistency with state water quality standards. Section 401 water quality certifications are assessed based on whether or not the proposed actions will affect (surface or groundwater) “waters of the state.”

UDNR’s Division of Water Rights is responsible for regulating the appropriation and distribution of water rights, including the operation of a *stream alteration permitting program*. The program focuses on the regulation of alterations to natural stream channels, which may also include associated fringe wetlands within 30 feet of a stream. Permits are issued for one year, after which compliance with the original permit conditions is assessed.

Additionally, UDNR divisions undertake a variety of wetland-related activities, including education and outreach, technical support and commentary, restoration, acquisition, and monitoring and assessment research.

A group of state and federal natural resource agencies, The Resource Development Coordinating Committee (RDCC), serves as a state clearinghouse for development projects involving natural resources, including wetlands.

Wetland Delineation

Delineation Guidance	Yes	No	Detail
Use State’s Own Method		X	
Use Corps’ 87 Manual and Regional Supplement	X		
Other (Please describe)		X	

Evaluation Methodology

Utah has no state-specific wetland evaluation methodology. Functional assessments similar to HGM are used in some cases, but there is no requirement to use any specific method(s). UDOT has an optional assessment method, but is only used internally.

Exempted Activities

Not confirmed with state; appears to be same as federal

Special Provisions for Agriculture and Forestry

Not confirmed with state; appears to be same as federal

Penalties and Enforcement

Compliance and enforcement procedures are outlined in the state’s water quality standards. However, violations to CWA §401/404 are handled at the federal level.

Permit Tracking

Utah’s Resource Development Coordinating Committee (RDCC) tracks CWA §401/404 water quality certifications for actions involving wetlands.

State General Permit (statewide vs. regional coverage)

Permit Coverage	Yes	No	Detail (Type of Permit)
Regional General Permit		X	
Statewide General Permit		X	There is no general permit with the Corps, but the state has a general programmatic permit for the stream alteration program.

Assumption of 404 Powers

Assumption Status	Yes	No	Detail
Assumed		X	
Working Toward Assumption		X	
Explored Assumption	X		Assumption has been explored, but found to be too expensive.

Joint permitting

None

Special Area Management Plans and Advanced Identification Plans

Information unavailable (Contact UDEQ Division of Water Quality)

Buffer Protections

The state does not provide any specific protections for wetland buffers, but does for riparian buffers, although they are limited (small width). Contact UDEQ Division of Water Quality for more information.

Mitigation Policy

The state of Utah has not adopted any legislation, policies, or guidelines regarding compensatory mitigation for wetlands and generally defers to the Corps for jurisdictional, wetland-related mitigation issues.

Mitigation Database

None

Section C. Monitoring and Assessment

Agency Responsible for Wetland Monitoring and Assessment

Utah Geological Survey (UGS) and Utah Department of Environmental Quality (UDEQ) both undertake wetland monitoring and assessment activities in the state. UGS provides most of the statewide tools, while UDEQ focuses most of their monitoring and assessment resources on Great Salt Lake-specific activities. A new state-specific condition assessment protocol was used by the state for the first time in 2014 after testing existing protocols in previous years.

Mapping/Inventory

The National Wetland Inventory (NWI) is complete for the state. The updating of NWI maps has been conducted by the UGS in specific project areas over the last several years.

State Wetland Mapping Public Portal

ARCGIS Utah Wetland Maps Webpage

<http://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=b9056fec9100407797faea21561348cc>

Wetland Classification and Assessment

An HGM classification system has been developed but not widely used. UDOT has an assessment methodology based on wetland classification (not used beyond UDOT). The state uses ecological integrity assessments and for the Great Salt Lake wetlands, a NWI data-based classification. The state aims to add functional and wildlife assessments in the future.

Statewide Wetland Monitoring Plan

The state does not have a formal statewide wetland monitoring plan; however, the state is currently working to develop its monitoring and assessment program. Specific details are detailed in the Utah Wetland Program Plan:

http://www.deq.utah.gov/ProgramsServices/programs/water/wetlands/docs/2014/08Aug/UTAH_WPP_Version3_2013.pdf

Overall Wetland Gain and Loss Tracking System

None.

Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Characteristics

Level	None	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<i>Utah</i>		X	X (condition assessment)	X (water quality indicators; added c-values from other states; floristic assessment is under development)

Type	None	IBI	Condition	Functional
<i>Utah</i>		DWQ	X	DWQ for birds re Great Salt Lake; starting to integrate at UGS

Frequency	None	Project Specific	Ongoing*
<i>Utah</i>		X	

*Utah has grant-funded projects that are successive and progressive; consequently, monitoring and assessment activities are similar to ongoing monitoring, but only funded by soft money project funding.

Participation in National Wetland Condition Assessment

NWCA Study Type	Yes	No
National Study	X	
State Intensification Study		X

Section D. Water Quality Standards

Wetland and Water Quality Standards

Information in this section may be incomplete; Please contact the Utah Department of Environmental Quality’s Division of Water Resources for the most up-to-date information.

Type	None	Use Existing WQ Standards	In Process	Adopted	Future Direction
Wetland-specific Designated Uses	X (Statewide)			X (For transitional waters along Great Salt Lake Only)	
Narrative criteria in the standards to protect designated wetland uses		X	X		
Numeric criteria in the standards based on wetland type and location to protect the designated uses		X (Freshwater WQ standards are not useful for saline wetlands)			
Anti-degradation policy includes wetlands		X			

Description: Utah has not adopted wetland specific water quality standards, but the rules do outline both numeric and narrative standards for “waters of the state.” Anti-degradation policies and use designations are also described.

The past approach of applying existing water quality standards to the Great Salt Lake wetlands is problematic for two reasons: 1) the standards that are specifically applied to wetlands are based on the geographical location of the aquatic resource rather than their ecological characteristics and 2) types of criteria used to assess and protect ecosystem condition or health in current water quality standards are not appropriate.

Consequently, the state is in the process of developing new wetland water quality standards. However, the current numeric criteria will remain in place with the exception of numeric DO and pH criteria for impoundment class wetlands. The numeric criteria for those parameters will be changed to protective narrative criteria for that wetland class. The standards revisions will be supported with documentation. The documentation will explain to stakeholders the technical circumstances of the change and how the

narrative criteria will adequately protect designated uses in an accountable way. Other refinements to water quality standards will be made as new monitoring and assessment data become available.

Section E. Voluntary Wetland Restoration

Types of Wetland Restoration Work Funded by the State:

Type of Work	YES	NO	Description
Fund Wetland Restoration (may include easement agreements)			Wildlife Habitat Account Endangered Species Fund
Private Land Restoration	X		Wildlife Habitat Account Endangered Species Fund
Public Land Restoration	X		Wildlife Habitat Account Endangered Species Fund Fire, Forestry and State Lands
Technical Assistance	X		Department of Agriculture and Farming; UDNR
Tax Incentives		X	
Other		X	

Description:

Utah does not operate a formal, state-level restoration program; however, restoration-related activities are conducted regularly at UDNR. The Wildlife Resource Division’s Habitat Section conducts restoration that benefits certain wildlife and habitat. In fact, Utah statutes establish a Wildlife Habitat Account that may be used to fund projects that benefit waterfowl, including preservation, development, and restoration of wetlands (and grants to conservation organizations conducting these activities). The account is funded by revenue from the sale of licenses, permits, and certificates of registration. UDNR staff also provides technical support to parties conducting restoration and mitigation within the state, including private landowners, consultants, Utah Department of Transportation, and others, and coordinate regularly with U.S. Department of Agriculture restoration programs.

Department of Agriculture and Farming and UDNR staff provides technical support to parties conducting restoration and mitigation within the state. In the case of UDNR, most of this work is in uplands. Both groups provide support to private landowners, consultants, Utah Department of Transportation, and others, and coordinate regularly with U.S. Department of Agriculture restoration programs.

Fire, Forestry and State Lands is working to restore 1.5 million acres of lakes and riverbeds and 2,200 miles of shoreline, of which a considerable amount is wetlands. All of this land is state sovereign land.

Voluntary Wetland Restoration Program Components

Wetland Restoration Efforts	Nothing in the Works	Planning	In Progress	Mature/Complete
Program has a set of restoration goals	N/A			
Coordinate with relevant agencies that outline restoration/protection goals and strategies and timeframes	N/A			
Developed multi-agency body to coordinate restoration/protection efforts	N/A			
Set restoration goals based on agency objectives and available information	N/A			

Goals for Restoration Projects

Goal	Yes	No	Description
No Net Loss	N/A		
Reverse Loss/Net Gain	N/A		
Nonpoint Source Pollution (NPS)/WQ	N/A		
Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDLs)	N/A		
Habitat	N/A		
Coastal Protection	N/A		
Floodwater Protection	N/A		
Groundwater	N/A		
Other (please describe)	N/A		

Landowner Guides and Handbooks to Assist with Voluntary Wetland Restoration Efforts

None. May want to check with Department of Agriculture and Farming.

Section F. Innovative and/or Highly Effective Education and Outreach

None.

Section G. Climate Change and Wetlands

The State of Utah is not actively addressing climate change at the state level. Some issues related to drought are being discussed, but nothing directly involving wetland staff. At the regional level, agencies and planning groups such as the Weber Basin Conservancy District are considering climate change as part of their planning.

Section H. Integration

Entity/Program Area	Yes/No	Description of the Connection	Contact for Follow-up
NPDES/Stormwater	YES	Wetland work is integrated at DWQ --- not integrated permitting, but joint project review	
303(d)	YES		
305(b) reporting on wetlands	YES	Focused on Great Salt Lake – adding increasing amounts of information on wetlands	
Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDLs)	NO		
Climate Change/ Resiliency	NO		
Land Use /Watershed planning	YES	DWQ is working with its partners to accomplish five near-term tasks toward implementation of the watershed approach. Completion of these tasks, in an iterative manner, will provide all stakeholders with assurance that progress is being made to assess and protect Great Salt Lake wetlands in a comprehensive way. Also Conservation Action Plans in several places across the state focusing on wetlands in watersheds.	
Flood/Hazard Mitigation	NO		
Coastal Work	NO		
Wildlife Action Plan	YES!	In draft form; includes a lot of wetland work (landscape models, etc.) Strong partnership with wildlife folks who are interested and in need of this support	
Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)	YES	http://www.recpro.org/assets/Library/SCORPs/ut_scorp_2014.pdf	
Other (Specify)		Federal land – lots of NOT coordinated efforts going on – national parks, BLM, forest service all developing tools, etc. State working on building new relationships with these agencies. Important since so much of this land is managed federally.	

State Wetland Program Continuum

Continuum Stage	Core Element 1: Regulation	Core Element 2: Monitoring & Assessment	Core Element 3: Wetland Water Quality Standards	Core Element 4: Voluntary Restoration
<p>Mature Stage High</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p> <p>Initial Implementation Stage</p> <p>Development Stage</p> <p>Early Stage Low</p>	401 Certification Only	<p style="text-align: center;">X (Trying what they developed)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">X (Great Salt Lake Only)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">X (Statewide)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">X No formal program though lots of unconsolidated efforts that have been around a long time but are not wetland focused)</p>

Section I. Contact Information

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1. Utah Reclamation, Mitigation and Conservation Commission
 - a) Utah Wetlands Ecosystem Education
http://www.mitigationcommission.gov/wetlands/wetlands_weep.html
2. Department of Agriculture
 - a) Conservation & Resource Management Division
 - i. Adopt-a-Waterbody Program
Adopt-a-Waterbody: Utah's Watershed Initiative is currently on hold. If you have questions, please contact:
Carl Adams
Division of Water Quality
801-536-4330
carladams@utah.gov
<http://www.adoptawaterbody.utah.gov/>
 - b) Agriculture Loans Program
<http://ag.utah.gov/divisions/conservation/loans.html>
 - c) Groundwater Program
The State Ground Water Program is no longer accepting applications for water testing, as the program has been suspended.
<http://ag.utah.gov/divisions/conservation/groundwater.html>
 - d) Non-Point Source Water Quality Program
<http://ag.utah.gov/divisions/conservation/nonpoint.html>
 - e) Utah Conservation Commission
Utah Environmental Stewardship Certification Program
<http://ag.utah.gov/divisions/conservation/commission.html>
3. Department of Environmental Quality
 - a) Division of Water Quality
 - i. Ground Water Quality Protection Program
<http://www.waterquality.utah.gov/GroundWater/index.htm>
 - ii. Stormwater Program & Permits
<http://www.waterquality.utah.gov/UPDES/stormwater.htm>
 - iii. Water Quality Management

- <http://www.waterquality.utah.gov/WQM/index.htm>
 - iv. Water Quality Monitoring
<http://www.waterquality.utah.gov/Monitoring/index.htm>
 - v. Watershed Management & Planning
<http://www.waterquality.utah.gov/TMDL/index.htm>
 - vi. Nonpoint Source Management Program
<http://www.waterquality.utah.gov/NPS/index.htm>
 - vii. Utah's Wetland Program Plan
http://water.epa.gov/type/wetlands/upload/utah_wpp.pdf
 - b) Division of Wildlife Resources
<http://naturalresources.utah.gov/divisions/wildlife.html>
 - c) Endangered Species Mitigation Fund
<http://naturalresources.utah.gov/esmf.html>
4. Department of Natural Resources
 - a. Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands Page
<http://www.ffsl.utah.gov/index.php/state-lands>
 - b. DNR's US Geological Survey Wetland Pages
<http://geology.utah.gov/resources/wetlands/>
 - c. DNR's Utah Geological Survey Groundwater Page
<http://geology.utah.gov/resources/groundwater/#tab-id-5>

Federal Government Programs

- 1. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Wetlands Reserve Program
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ut/programs/easements/wetlands/>
- 2. Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission
<http://www.mitigationcommission.gov>

Other Organization Wetland Programs

- 1. Utah State University: Agricultural Experiment Station'
 - a) Wetland Discovery Point
<http://uaes.usu.edu/hm/aes-news/wetland-discovery-point/>
- 2. Salt Lake County Watershed Planning & Restoration Program
<http://www.watershed.slco.org/index.html>
- 3. Linking Communities, Wetlands and Migratory Birds
 - a) The Utah Linking Initiative
<http://utahlinking.org/>
- 4. Utah Partners for Conservation and Development
 - a) Watershed Restoration Initiative
<http://wildlife.utah.gov/watersheds/index.php>