

Welcome to *H2O Today* where we can learn about water and how people use it in our country, state, and in your town. Use this guide to learn about the water issues affecting Utahns today.

Toward Sustainable Solutions

The scarcity of water is the central consideration of living in the arid West. Utahns have approached this problem in a variety of ways. As you read the examples in this guide and view the *H2O Today* exhibition, consider that sometimes solutions merely push a problem downstream only to resurface later.

FIND the proposed pipeline projects on the floor map – the Bear River Development Project and the Lake Powell Pipeline. Follow the pipelines and note what environments they would be built in and communities they would serve.

THINK: As you read the exhibit and this guide, what are the factors that have determined how water is allocated in our arid environment? Do you support or oppose the proposed water development projects and why?

Use It or Lose It

Utah water law is grounded in the principle of “beneficial use.” This means that someone can lose their water rights if they don’t use their water.

FIND on the map all the rivers that feed into Great Salt Lake. This terminal lake is the cornerstone of the ecosystem in northern Utah, yet there is no law ensuring it gets enough water to stay healthy. Instead, river water must be used or those who have a right risk losing it.

THINK: How would water use change if Great Salt Lake had a guaranteed right to a certain amount of water?



Great Salt Lake levels in 2011 and 2016. NASA.

Water Rights

FIND the Wasatch Oasis Zone on the floor map. Do you live in this zone?

In the Eastern US, water rights typically belong to whomever owns the land adjacent to the water source. But in the arid American West, water rights are not connected to land ownership. Whoever files a claim to the water first has primary rights. This is known as “prior appropriation,” or “first in time, first in right.”

The principle of prior appropriation has allowed for the Central Utah Project (CUP), a massive water infrastructure project that supplies residents of the Wasatch Oasis Zone with water piped over the mountains from the Uinta Basin.

Meanwhile the Ute Tribe of the Uintah-Ouray Indian Reservation has negotiated with the government for a century over their own rights to this water. More than just a commodity, water has cultural and spiritual importance in the traditions of the Ute people.

THINK: How would water use in Utah look different if water rights were tied to ownership of the adjacent land? How might we change water law to reflect the reality that water is an essential part of its natural environment?

Consider the CUP. Do you think it has solved the problem of water scarcity in Utah? Why or why not?



Strawberry Highline Canal, Salem, 1915. (part of the CUP), Utah State Historical Society.

PLACE
STAMP
HERE



The Future Lies Downstream

Did you know that Washington County is the fastest growing county in Utah? There are roughly 180,000 people currently living there, and the county's population is expected to reach 500,000 by 2065. St. George is in a desert and gets less than 9 inches of rain in an average year.

FIND the image of the Colorado River on the exhibit panel titled "Who Owns the Water?" The Colorado River is the lifeblood of seven Western states, supplying water to 40 million people. In most years the Colorado dries up before reaching its mouth.

THINK: Where does St. George get its water? Proponents of the Lake Powell Pipeline argue that a greater supply can assure the state's water future, while others argue that better management of our current resources is the better path. Will the Lake Powell Pipeline provide a lasting solution to Utah's water challenges?

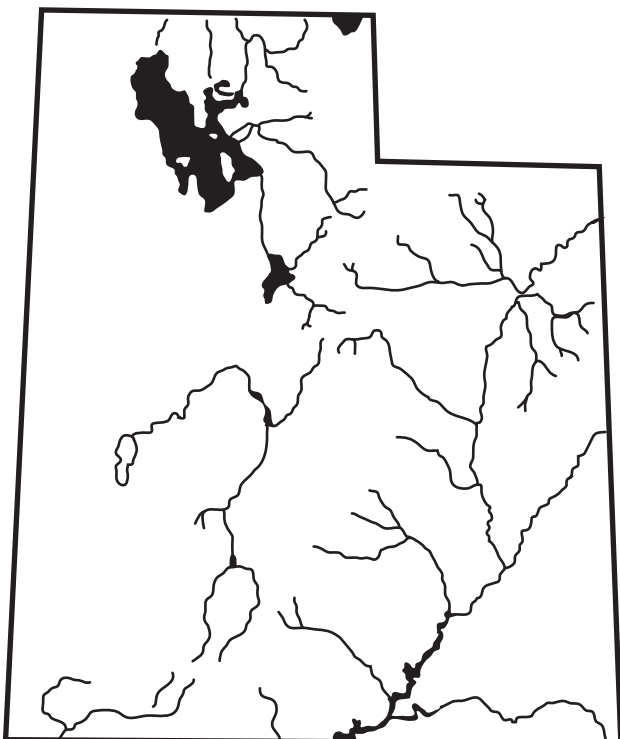
Utahns have often adapted to our scarcity of water, but we have also tried to engineer our limited resources into supporting an unsustainable lifestyle. What are some of the consequences of bending nature to our will? How do you think Utahns should address water issues?

Golf courses in St. George, Utah By Air Aerial Imaging.



Alfred Lambourne, *The Cliffs at Promontory*, 1887, oil on canvas, Utah Museum of Fine Arts (UMFA1987.006).

Where are your favorite waterways? Color in where your water comes from.



Water Is a Rare and Precious Resource

FIND the section called "Use it or Lose it" and read all about water as a precious resource. Did you know Utahns use 178 gallons of water per day? That is second in the nation for most water used! Did you know that irrigation accounts for over 80% of Utah's water use?

THINK: What do you think we can do to reduce our water use in order to conserve this important resource? Think of one idea, then send a letter to your state representative telling them about it. **HINT:** You can use the postcard here to send your message! Find who your representative is here: house.utah.gov.



H2O Today is organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, and is touring Utah in partnership with Utah Humanities and local host organizations. The tour is part of *Think Water Utah*, a statewide collaboration and conversation on the critical topic of water presented by Utah Humanities and its partners.

For more information, see www.utahhumanities.org

#ThinkWaterUtah



#IdeasInAction