

Great Salt Lake Planning Process



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Overview

DNR has management programs in place for the resources of GSL. Those programs are designed to both conserve the lake's resources, and to make those resources available for beneficial uses. DNR's management of AISP and Farmington Bay WMA, the regulation of commercial brine shrimping and sport hunting and the MLP are examples of resource management programs currently in operation.

At the same time, factors exist which are affecting or have the potential to affect the lake, its resources and beneficial uses. Purposes of this planning process are to ensure that existing programs contribute optimally to DNR's management objectives for the lake and that emerging issues and demands are addressed in a coherent and comprehensive manner, consistent with overall management objectives.

The Planning Process

In August 1997, the DNR assembled the GSL Planning Team (Planning Team) of representatives from each of the divisions of DNR, with the charge to develop a resource management plan for DNR and all its divisions. The planning process utilized by the team is based on the land management planning process set forth in Section 65A-2-4 of the Utah Code, and in implementing rules found at R652-90 adopted by DFFSL, specifically the processes for CMPs. Because of the scale of GSL as a planning unit, and because of the complexity and significance of the lake and its resources,

the Planning Team has implemented steps and public processes in addition to those required in rule.

Public involvement in the planning process was officially initiated on February 3, 1998 with a notification of State Action to RDCC. Locally published public notices invited participation in several scoping meetings conducted in each of the five counties in which GSL is located. However, starting in November, the Planning Team also conducted informal internal and external scoping and issues identification, and attended a number of association, club and individual agency meetings to discuss the plan and the planning process.

Statement of Current Conditions and Trends

The starting point for development of a comprehensive and consistent management plan is the assembly of relevant information and analyses into a resource inventory. Through a one-year internal and external scoping project, the Planning Team identified the resource inventory information it believes is relevant to the good management of GSL. This inventory was assembled and evaluated to develop descriptions of the current conditions of the lake's resources, and to discern trends which should be taken into account in future management. Because the information available on GSL and its resources is encyclopedic in scope and volume, the team digested and presented it in the context of the key issues and needs. The *Statement of Current Conditions and*

Trends (SCCT) represents a baseline picture of GSL and its resources.

Five hundred copies of the SCCT were available for GSLTT and public review. Comments generated from this review improved the SCCT section of the *Draft Comprehensive Management Plan* (Draft CMP) and formed the baseline to develop of an array of management alternatives for the Draft CMP. The revised SCCT section will be included in the Great Salt Lake Resource Document (GSLRD).

Great Salt Lake Management Alternatives

The array of GSL management alternatives was prepared by the Planning Team for a second series of public meetings to invite public review and comment. Five public meetings were held in five counties between January and February 1999. Comments and responses on alternatives were included in the Draft CMP.

The purpose of the GSL Management Alternatives Analysis was to provide a framework for a general comparison of management alternatives. The analysis considered four general criteria to evaluate the proposed management alternatives:

- Feasibility/Effectiveness
- Possible Impacts
- Conflicts/Coordination
- Public Trust Protection
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Feasibility included consideration of the time, money and other resources required. Effectiveness indicated how successful the proposed alternative

would be a general context. Possible impacts were considered in this analysis and included ecosystem, ecology, industry and other impacts. Conflict and coordination examined user group, agency and other conflicts, and required coordination. Public trust is a broad criterion which examined potential impacts on public trust values.

Economic Analysis

The Office of Energy and Resource Planning (OERP) evaluated the economic impacts of three management recommendations contained in the *Draft GSL CMP: Planning Document* which was the internal review version of the Draft CMP. OERP investigated the economics involved in three planning issues:

- Strategies to deal with a fluctuating lake level
- Policy of WDPP operation
- Salinity management

Numerous tables and charts were compiled. The economic analysis produced interesting and helpful results in regard to these issues and the selected alternative.

Scientific Review Committee

DNR selected a Scientific Review Committee (SRC) to “verify and validate the scientific information presented in the *Draft GSL CMP: Planning Document*. DNR requested that the reviewers focus on an evaluation of the scientific underpinnings presented in the SCCT section of the planning document. The purpose of the review process was to

offer an unbiased assessment of the technical information base utilized by DNR to make decisions and tradeoffs related to management of GSL. The review process evaluated available technical information, identified information that was limited or missing, and critiqued the information base to enhance the credibility of the planning process. SRC was asked to ignore political and economic issues of GSL and focus only on the science.

The SCR held several meetings with the U.S. Geological Survey and DNR staff concerning water-salt balance modeling and also interviewed several government and industry scientists. The SRC produced three documents, a letter to Kathleen Clarke, DNR Director; *Evaluation of the Scientific Underpinnings* of the May 1, 1999 *GSL CMP: Planning Document* and appendices with several sections of supporting information. The SRC also met with Kathleen Clarke and the Planning Team to present their findings in August 1999.

The Planning Team responded to the SRC recommendations by analyzing, making additions, edits and other adjustments to the Draft CMP. SRC recommendations resulted in additional review, study and the development of two new appendices H and I to provide more detailed information in the Draft CMP.

Salinity Engineering Study

In November, 1999, DNR funded an engineering study to investigate measures to reduce the salinity differential between the north and south arms of GSL. DNR requested that the contractor:

1. Investigate strategies to improve bi-directional flow through the railroad causeway between Promontory Point and Lakeside to reach specified target conditions to reduce the salinity differential between the north and south arms of GSL;
2. Coordinate with DFFSL and other supporting agencies to verify the science, and to pre-design geotechnically viable engineering options; and
3. Determine estimated costs associated with the options.

The contractor reviewed studies, reports, water-salt balance model output, and specified conditions to be modeled. Alternative measures were screened and evaluated for effectiveness, cost, ability to construct, impact to the railroad and operation and maintenance.

Public Involvement Overview

Stakeholder Meetings

Stakeholder meetings have been a valuable part of this process and were initiated before the GSL Planning Project was announced. Meetings were held with federal agencies, local governmental officials, citizens, industry groups and interested individuals. Through stakeholder meetings, correspondence, and other conversations, 550 people interacted with the members of the Planning Team from November 1997 to April 1998.

Several stakeholder meetings were held with these groups in January and February 1999. Approximately 60 people attended these meetings during the

presentations and reviewed proposed GSL management alternatives.

The time period between February 1999 and the release of the Draft CMP also provided another opportunity to meet with stakeholders and discuss baseline information, alternatives and the Planning Team's next steps.

Public Meetings

Two sets of public meetings were held in Weber, Box Elder, Davis, Salt Lake and Tooele counties. The first set of public meetings included a presentation about the purposes of the planning effort and an invitation to participate in the process. Approximately 80 people attended the meetings held between February and March of 1998. The second set invited public review and comment on the proposed array of GSL management alternatives. Approximately 100 people attended.

After meeting with the public, interested stakeholders, and GSLTT on the GSL management alternatives, the Planning Team completed a comment analysis. Comments and responses were presented in the draft CMP.

Great Salt Lake Technical Team Involvement

GSLTT participated in the review of the SCCT document. On November 5, 1997 a GSLTT meeting was held as an introduction to the planning process. On February 23, 1999 the GSLTT

considered the Planning Team's proposed management alternatives and discussed the issues in an informal group setting. Approximately 43 members of this advisory group attended the meeting.

Legislative and County Official Participation

On February 23, 1999 the Planning Team set up displays and distributed information in the Capitol Rotunda. Legislators and state employees had an opportunity to exchange information with the Planning Team. In other settings, DNR administration and Planning Team members visited with county officials and state legislators.

Three additional opportunities for lake issue orientation were made available to governmental officials and state legislators.

Great Salt Lake Planning Team Presentations and Special Meetings

Members of the Planning Team made over 150 appearances and presentations to different governmental entities, agencies, special interest groups, organizations and industry.

Media Involvement

Press releases, radio announcements and other newspaper articles highlighting GSL and the planning process have been numerous and ongoing throughout the planning process.