



Northern Advisory Council January 12th 2023 Presentation to the Colorado River Authority of Utah Board

THE NAC

The Northern Advisory Council (NAC) is composed of 9 members representing various perspectives from northern Utah. We reflect a diverse set of backgrounds and viewpoints. Some NAC members have worked in state or local government. Others have backgrounds as policy advocates for trade groups or non-governmental entities. Others are attorneys or recreationists. One thing NAC members all have in common is that we take water policy and Utah's water future seriously.

NAC 2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Launched the Northern Advisory Council (NAC) in June comprised of Summit, Salt Lake, Wasatch, Utah, Juab and Sanpete counties
- Elected Chris Robinson as council Co-Chair
- Deliberated over the NAC's mission to provide advice to the Board on the use, development, conservation, and protection of Utah's Colorado River entitlement
- Established general operational and administrative procedures
- Identified ways to inform and share input with the Authority Board
- Conducted 7 meetings held over the course of 2022 - June, July, August, September, October, November, and December (all in SLC)
- Discussed and explored key river policy themes, including conservation, xeriscaping, incentives, water finance, measurement, metering, agricultural optimization, Lake Powell pipeline feasibility, tribal water rights, 2026 guidelines, data integrity and data consistency, and curtailment scenarios
- Demonstrated a commitment to ongoing exposure and engagement with a variety of opinions by hosting diverse expert guests: Bart Leeflang, Jack Schmidt, Candice Hasenyager, Amy Haas, Sara Larsen, and Nathan Bracken

NAC 2023 OBJECTIVES

- Continue inviting guest speakers to educate the council members and to gain an understanding of different policy options and perspectives
- Hold fact-finding meetings at targeted locations to gain a better on-the-ground perspective
- Collaborate more with the other advisory councils
- Continue to provide timely, concrete, actionable recommendations to the Board on how best to allocate scarce Colorado River resources in the new “normal” and anticipated worst-case aridification scenarios.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD

The NAC believes that urgent action is necessary to avoid effects associated with the current and anticipated diminished supply of Colorado River water. The state cannot “pass the buck” or simply hope for a long series of wet years. There is a real danger to inaction.

To help spur action, the NAC makes the following general recommendations to the Authority Board:

1. More Feedback and Engagement with Councils

We request more frequent, direct, and substantive communication from the Board. Please help us understand better how we can help you. Please consider consulting with the advisory councils before major policy decisions, management plan updates, or official statements are made. In addition, we ask that the Board clarify how it believes the advisory councils should engage with the Board.

2. Conservation

Conservation is our top priority. We endorse and echo Board Member and DNR Director Joel Ferry’s recent statement that “*Conservation has to be our first choice. Across the board. Period. Not only our first choice, it’s our most cost-effective choice. So before we get to spending tens of billions of dollars building pipes somewhere, let’s do conservation. Let’s do 100% conservation.*” We encourage the Board to prioritize and champion policies that incentivize and encourage conservation of both M&I and agricultural water use.

3. Best Science

We encourage the Board to continue incorporating the best available science and measurement data available for management and policy recommendations and future annual management plan development.

4. Protect Utah’s Interests

The Board should continue to keep the stability and ecological health of the Colorado River basin system in mind, while still protecting the interests of Utah and the sovereign tribes, as it engages in its interstate and federal negotiations.

The NAC makes the following specific recommendations to the Authority Board:

1. Aggressively Pursue and Wisely Use Federal Funding

The Board should encourage Utah's federal delegation, the state legislature, and the Governor's office to do everything possible to take advantage of the billions of dollars allocated through the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure and the Inflation Reduction Act funding to help build resilience in the Colorado River system.

2. Fact-Finding On-Site Visits

We encourage the Board to continue to expand its understanding of basin-wide water use, shrinking water supply, and programs. One way to do this would be to consider participating in and sponsoring in-person fact-finding field trips to key areas throughout the entire Basin. These fact-finding tours will help broaden the Board's and others' - including advisory council members and other key Utah stakeholders - exposure and knowledge of the many challenges facing the Colorado River Basin.

3. Curtailment and Scenario Planning

We suggest the Board utilize scenario planning of potential implications of curtailment of Colorado River water. The purposes of this scenario planning would be to inform the general public and policymakers and to produce forecasts that consider the anticipated worst-case hydrology and potential curtailment. Everyone would greatly benefit if the Authority modeled and publicized possible curtailment scenarios so that the public can plan accordingly. This could include publicizing the specific calculations used to quantify the state's entitlement, including the supporting information and data and the assumptions used to reach this calculation.

4. Water Pricing Reforms

We encourage the Board to support water pricing structures that promote water conservation. These efforts should include looking at the balance of covering costs between property taxes and water rates and ensuring equitable application to avoid disparate or unfair impacts.

5. Agricultural Optimization and Conversion

We encourage the Board to identify, support, and promote incentives and programs that will result in agricultural water conservation and optimization to reduce water consumption. These incentives could also include identifying, targeting, and promoting the best croplands – those that can produce crops in water-efficient ways. Even after the best conservation and ag optimization efforts have been implemented, we recognize that some water will be shifted from agricultural to M&I use.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these recommendations to the Authority Board. The work you do on this Board is vital to the state of Utah and we thank you for your time and service. We hope the recommendations outlined in this report will help you fulfill your Authority objectives on behalf of the citizens of Utah.