



**Dea Theodore**

District 6  
DHTheodore@slco.org

**John Bennett**

Senior Policy Advisor  
jobennett@slco.org  
385-468-7456

Friday, January 13, 2023

Re: Great Salt Lake

Dear Governor Cox, President Adams, and Speaker Wilson,

A recent news story shocked many in Utah and across the western states, claiming that the Great Salt Lake is on course to vanish within approximately 5 years.

As the Salt Lake County Councilmember representing both Big and Little Cottonwood canyons and as a trained biologist, I understand much of the alarm regarding the decline of the Great Salt Lake. Over the past several months, I have researched this question, consulted with numerous experts, and asked many questions of these experts relating to the Great Salt Lake.

**Conservation. Preliminary estimates show that eliminating all net household and industrial consumption of water in the basin would not restore the Lake.**

Calculations show that approximately 7 million acre-feet of water would be needed to bring the Lake from its current low back up to historical levels.

**Agriculture is not the enemy.** The claims that we must eliminate alfalfa and other farming are both egregious and not based on the facts.

**What's the solution?**

Forest management. Utah's forests, many of which are largely overgrown and frequently unhealthy, contain roughly 7.6 billion trees. The trees in our over-grown forests and other non-native, noxious trees along our rivers and streams are consuming trillions of gallons of water that would otherwise flow downstream to the Great Salt Lake.

Many of our forests are already in desperate need of tree thinning due to high and extreme fire danger. Many of these forest areas are in the central Wasatch Mountain in my Council District. The thinning of overgrowth in the Great Salt Lake Basin would restore over 1.5 million acre-feet of water per year to the Great Salt Lake; enough to have the Lake on its way to restored water levels over the next 5 years.

**Watershed Restoration is the Key to saving the Lake.**

The State of Utah and its residents have a solid foundation to remedy decades of forest mismanagement. Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative is wildly successful and local private companies have developed technology and techniques that are not only environmentally friendly but can be "scaled up" to meet this massive undertaking. In addition, private landowners have committed key lands in the watershed as demonstration forests and watershed restoration.

<https://publiclands.utah.gov/energy-resources/watershed-restoration-initiative/>

We do not accept that the Great Salt Lake should be dry within 5 years. The data shows that with proper forest management and tree thinning, the Great Salt Lake should be well on its way to sustainable water levels within 5 years.

I have attached a detailed fact sheet. I have also included for you below a preliminary list of

those supporting an immediate review of the data, necessary funding, and appropriations for the expedited implementation of reforestation and tree thinning to restore the Great Salt Lake.

Several more individuals and groups have expressed their desire to be added as supporters of this letter. Due to time constraints, many of them were not included. I encourage them to continue to add their support.

In addition, we request adequate time to present to the Legislature in the upcoming session.

Sincerely,



Dea Theodore  
Salt Lake County Councilmember District 6

Preliminary list of those supporting an immediate review of the data, necessary funding, and appropriations for the expedited implementation of reforestation and tree thinning to restore the Great Salt Lake:

Michael Styler - Prior Director of the Utah Department of Natural Resources

Rep. Carl Albrecht

Rep. Ken Ivory

Rep. Tim Jimenez

Rep. Trevor Lee

Rep. Phil Lyman

Greg Jensen - Sevier County Commissioner

Wade Hollingshead - Kane County Commissioner

Celeste Meyer - Kane County Commissioner

Paul Cozzens - Iron County Commissioner

Marilyn Wood - Iron County Commissioner

Dennis Blackburn - Wayne County Commissioner

Bruce Adams - San Juan County Commissioner

Darin Bushman - Piute County Commissioner

Iron County Farm Bureau

Mike Siaperas - 106reforest

GOUD Maragani - Log Cabin Republicans, President

John Bennett - Sr. Policy Advisor to Salt Lake County Council Member Dea Theodore

