

Mike for Utah: Water

Utah has a legacy of smart water usage and conservation dating back to when Mormon pioneer settlers reached the Salt Lake Valley. Residents and elected officials should honor that tradition of good stewardship of Utah's lakes, rivers, and reservoirs. Without innovative and careful water usage, Utah could never have grown to support the three million people who call it home today.

However, Utah is the second driest state in the nation and yet claims the highest per capita usage. The state is currently facing urgent challenges regarding water policy, infrastructure, and conservation. Smart water policy depends not only on prioritizing conservation but also finding sensible, fiscally responsible water policy and infrastructure solutions that allow both families and industry to thrive in Utah.

As Governor of Utah, Mike will follow a water management plan with four main components:

1. Water Conservation
2. Updated Water Metering and Pricing
3. Opposition to Lake Powell Pipeline
4. Opposition to Bear River Project

Water Conservation

With Utah's exceptionally high per capita water usage and exceedingly dry climate, greater water conservation should be a priority.

There are a number of actions that can be taken to achieve Utah's conservation goals that will not only contribute to smarter water usage but will decrease water costs and translate directly to economic benefits for Utahns and their families.

As Governor Mike Weinholtz will:

- » Increase public education on conservation techniques through the 'Slow the Flow' program
- » Allow water districts to implement penalties for improper water use and abuse.
- » Incentivize more efficient agricultural irrigation systems such as lining and piping canals (to mitigate millions of gallons lost each year to evaporation)
- » Working with agricultural producers to choose more water friendly crops appropriate to Utah's climate.
- » Xeriscape or landscape public and governmental properties in ways that decrease water usage.

Opposition to LPP

Not only is the Lake Powell Pipeline unnecessary, unwanted, and fiscally irresponsible, but inaccurate information was included in the proposal.

A group of Utah economists have condemned the bill for the faulty calculations used to estimate its cost and stated that Utah taxpayers will be left to foot a bill worth hundreds of millions of dollars. Further still it's anticipated that the pipeline will inflate the cost of water in Washington County as much as 500 percent.

As Governor Mike will:

- » Immediately move to repeal the 2015 Water Infrastructure Funding bill (S.B. 281), which identified and authorized funding for the Pipeline.
- » Advocate for greater transparency and scrutiny of all water infrastructure projects, to eliminate inaccuracies in funding estimates and proposals.
- » Ensure greater involvement of county, city, and community leaders in collecting input regarding future water infrastructure planning.
- » Favor more fiscally responsible, local water infrastructure solutions.

Bear River Project

The \$1.5 billion dollar proposition to build an estimated 7 dams and 50-mile pipeline along the Bear River is both ecologically and economically unsound.

The Bear River Project has been opposed by a broad coalition of water experts, environmental groups, economists, and Utah citizens. Besides being fiscally irresponsible, the project represents a continuation of poor water policy exacerbated by grandiose non-solutions that have undergone woefully inadequate scrutiny and analysis.

As Governor Mike Weinholtz will:

- » Immediately move to repeal the 2016 Infrastructure Funding Amendments bill (S.B. 80) that diverted Utah sales tax money to pay for the Bear River Project.
- » Ensure adequate scrutiny of both the economic and environmental impact of such proposals.
- » Ensure greater involvement of county, city, and community leaders in collecting input regarding future water infrastructure planning.
- » Favor more fiscally responsible, local water infrastructure solutions.

Water Metering & Pricing

Much of Utah's water supply is paid for through property taxes and does not factor in actual water usage to determine how much users pay. This pricing strategy does not encourage conservation as water is priced below cost, so no pricing signal exists to incentivize appropriate water usage. Utah does not have a universal system for metering water, so data is unreliable and ineffective for developing strategies for conservation. Finally, there is no minimum block rate increase for higher water usage, so major users are not incentivized to conserve.

Universal metering would ensure accurate water usage data that can be used to make more precise predictions about Utah's present and future needs. Many of Utah's districts currently do not implement metering so the data that is used to make decisions is estimated and inconsistent. Standard procedures would help create policy that better reflect the needs of Utah communities. Subsidizing water costs through property taxes is bad water policy because it does not encourage conservation. With a universal metering system in place, users could be charged according to their actual water usage, which would lead to increased conservation.

As Governor Mike Weinholtz will:

- » Use taxes associated with development projects to finance implementation of metering equipment as needed.
- » Hold water managers accountable for accurate reporting to allow for correct assessment of water waste and development of appropriate remedies.
- » Discontinue the use of property taxes to subsidize the cost of water and charge customers according to their actual usage.
- » Create minimum block rate increases, where the lowest rates cover normal usage while higher usage is charged a progressively higher fee. Current rates in Utah do not adequately encourage conservation.