



May 2024

Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission FINAL FY2023 ANNUAL REPORT

ABOUT THE MITIGATION COMMISSION

The Mitigation Commission comprises a five-member Commission and eleven staff. Commission members are Utah residents. The President of the United States appoints all members from nominations: one from the U.S. Senate; one from the U.S. House of Representatives; one from the Central Utah Water Conservancy District (the entity primarily responsible for constructing the Central Utah Project, for which mitigation must be completed); and two from the Governor of Utah – one from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, and one recommended by Utah environmental organizations. Except for the District representative, all members are to have training or experience in wildlife or environmental conservation matters. The Commission is responsible for appointing an Executive Director, who in turn is responsible for hiring staff.

Commissioners

Brad Barber, Chair (Utah Environmental Organizations)
Gene Shawcroft (Central Utah Water Conservancy District)
Robert L. Morgan (U.S. Senate)
J. Shirley (Utah Division of Wildlife Resources)
At publication, the U.S. House of Representatives nomination is pending appointment

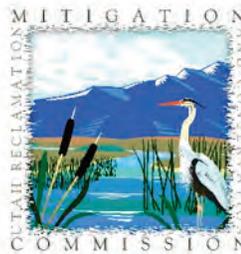
Staff

Michael D. Mills, Executive Director
Kim Rodgers, Administrative Assistant
Melissa Stamp, Projects Manager
Paul Abate, Project Coordinator
B. Eric McCulley, Project Coordinator
Richard Mingo, Project Coordinator
Jessica Stegmeier, Project Coordinator
Paula Trater, Biological Technician
Isabelle Simmons, Resource Specialist
Diane Simmons, Public Information Officer
Channa Vyfvinkel, Financial Officer
Mata Lolofie, Accounting Technician



Office Location

The Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission is headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah at the following address:
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Introduction

Thank you for reading the FY2023 Annual Report of the Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission (Mitigation Commission). The Mitigation Commission was authorized in 1992 through the Central Utah Project Completion Act (CUPCA; Titles II through VI of Public Law 102-575). The Mitigation Commission’s primary responsibility is to plan, coordinate and fund programs to mitigate for adverse effects of the Bonneville Unit of the Central Utah Project and to conserve fish, wildlife and related recreation resources in Utah.

This report highlights our fiscal year 2023 accomplishments and describes the effectiveness of our actions toward meeting CUPCA requirements. It also identifies planned future actions and potential revisions to our Mitigation and Conservation Plan. The current Plan covers the five-year period of FY2021 through FY2025.

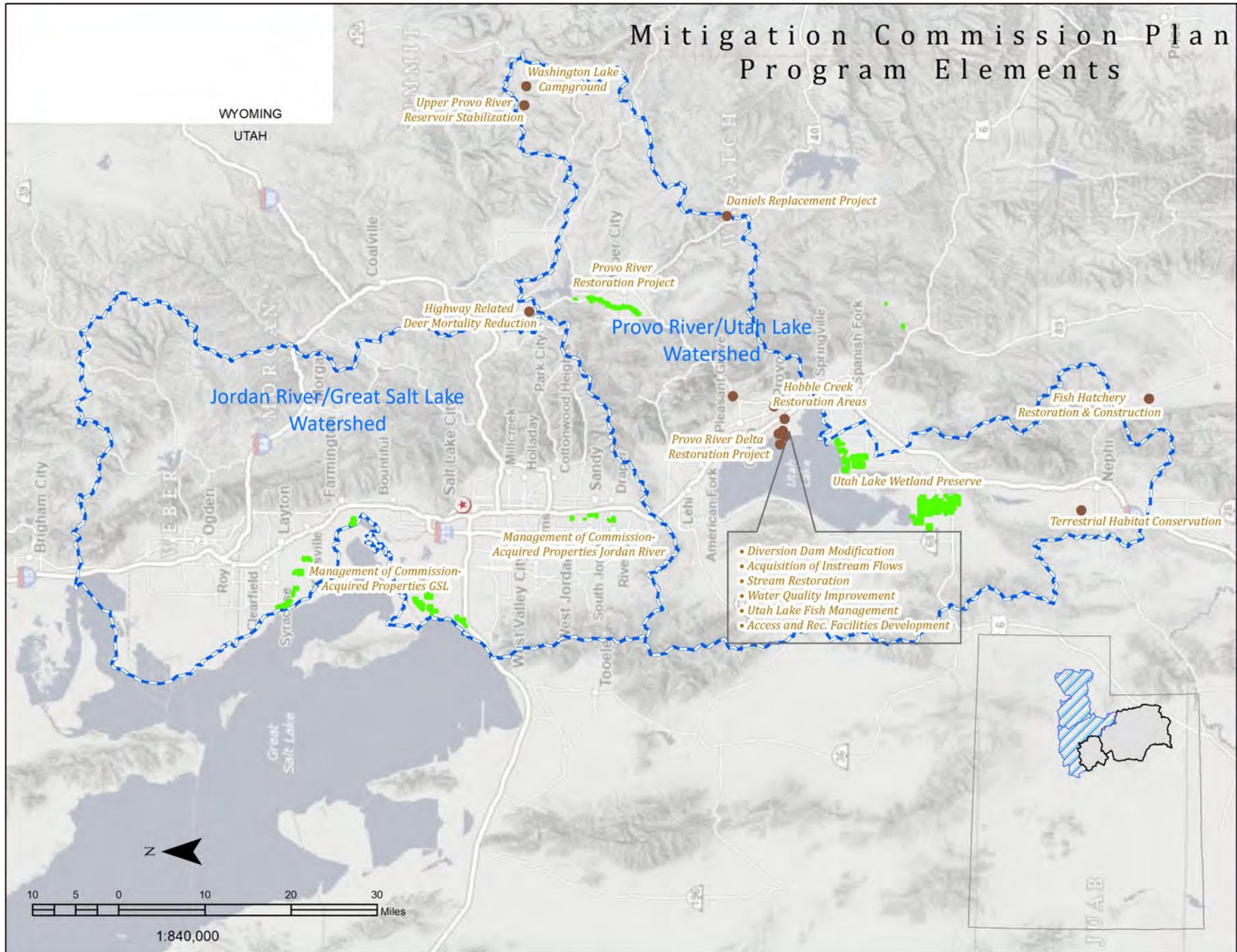
The Mitigation Commission’s program relies on partnerships with the larger natural resource community. The Mitigation Commission forms partnerships with natural resource agencies, State and local governments, Indian tribes, universities and non-profit organizations, to carry out its many projects in a coordinated and cooperative manner. Therefore, throughout this report, the term “we” is intended to include the many partners essential to Mitigation Commission projects. Please refer to the back page of this report for a listing of our prior and current partners.

From FY1994 through FY2023, the Mitigation Commission enacted 335 funding agreements with partners in order to carry out its work. During this 29-year period, the Mitigation Commission expended more than \$335 million planning and implementing projects on the ground to fulfill fish and wildlife mitigation requirements and other conservation objectives of CUPCA.

During FY2023, the Mitigation Commission celebrated some significant milestones associated with several projects. Among these accomplishments, the connection of the Provo River to the restored Provo River Delta was especially significant as this action was a culmination of over a decade of planning and efforts to construct the restored delta. Work continues on the Provo River Delta and other projects as we move forward with our agency’s purpose.

Comments on the Draft FY2023 Annual Report

A draft of this report was made available for a 30-day public and agency review. We received a lot of positive feedback on the draft, which was much appreciated. Otherwise, no further comments were received.



LOWER PROVO RIVER - UTAH LAKE WATERSHED

FY2023 Actions and Effectiveness

Provo River Delta Restoration Project at Utah Lake

- Completed excavation of Delta channels and wetland pond habitats.
- Diverted majority of Provo River flows into the Delta and successfully implemented flood protection measures during runoff from Utah's record snowpack.
- Delivered flows of 10 cfs into original channel and downsized $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of that channel to fit the new flow regime. Installed initial phase of small dam at Utah Lake State Park to maintain water levels for recreation.
- Planted 74,000 native riparian and wetland plants across new Delta habitats.
- Installed aeration system in original channel to maintain healthy dissolved oxygen levels.
- Hosted more than 62 tours for the general public and other interested stakeholders.
- Continued to work with researchers to monitor and evaluate fish populations and habitat use, birds, and vegetation across the Delta.

June Sucker Recovery

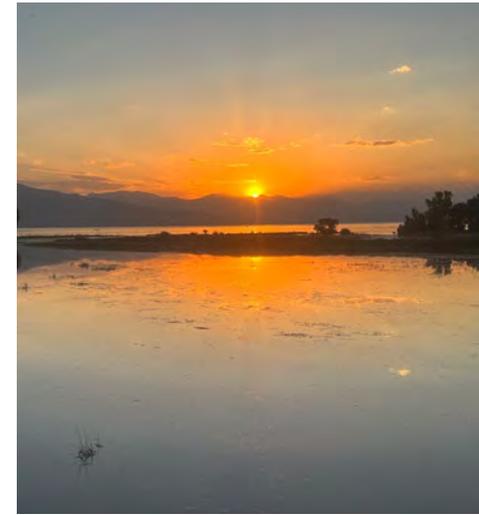
- Coordinated with Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) to monitor the Provo River Delta for adult, larval, and juvenile June sucker activity. More than 6,300 tagged adults were observed moving through the Delta into the lower Provo River, representing tens of thousands of spawning June sucker. After spawning, thousands of larvae and small numbers of juveniles were observed using Delta habitat.
- Supported development of hatchery-reared larval June sucker, which will be incorporated into the June Sucker Recovery Implementation Program's (JSRIP) stocking program for Utah Lake.

Lower Provo River Instream Flow Provisions

- Worked with the June Sucker Flow Workgroup to help manage instream flows for a successful 2023 June sucker spawning period.



Connecting Provo River with new Delta, March 2023



Sunset over new Delta and Utah Lake, July 2023



Crews reinforce delta streambank during high flows



Measuring flows in the original Provo River channel



Young June sucker were observed in the new Provo River Delta.

Photo by UDWR

- Delivered summer base flows matching/exceeding the wet year target of 113 cfs to ensure the river and Provo River Delta had enough water to keep temperature and oxygen levels healthy for fish and supportive of outdoor recreation.
- Finalized a funding agreement with Central Utah Water Conservancy District to dedicate approximately 76 acre-feet of water right shares to instream flows on the lower Provo River.

Utah Lake Wetland Preserve

- Conducted flow rate measurements of several wells for submission of proof of beneficial use to Utah Division of Water Rights.
- Funded management activities including weed control, vegetation management, water management, fencing, and public access. Evaluated and permitted seed collections with local seed companies and incorporated a seed sharing provision to support future restoration actions on Commission projects.
- Obtained appraisals for two potential land acquisitions and delivered offers to respective landowners.



Measuring flow rate of well (left) and Native pollinator species in bloom (right) at Wetland Preserve. Photos by UDWR

Planned Activities

- Construct Delta Gateway Park; Skipper Bay Trailhead, parking lot and trail; and a wildlife viewing platform in preparation for opening the Delta to the public in late 2024.
- Complete recreation improvements on original Provo River channel, including installing three public fishing platforms and two non-motorized boat launches.
- Install final diversion structure and permanent flow delivery system; complete next phase of small downstream dam on original channel.
- Work with UDWR to develop a long-term stewardship and management plan for the Delta; implement weed control, additional revegetation, and other vegetation management activities for Delta habitats.
- Acquire additional water rights to support Lower Provo River instream flows.
- Work with June Sucker Flow Workgroup to assess potential spring runoff for 2024 and utilize JSRIP water rights to optimize and deliver spawning flows and summer instream flows.
- Complete assessment of Utah Lake Wetland Preserve private land parcel offers and, if possible, complete land purchases in FY2024. Transfer ownership and management of the Preserve to UDWR.



Construction of Provo River Delta diversion structure



Structure built to house original channel aeration system



Saturday tour at the Provo River Delta Project



Crews load a small boat with native plugs to plant in the Delta

MIDDLE PROVO RIVER WATERSHED

FY2023 Actions and Effectiveness

Provo River Restoration Project (PRRP)

- Continued PRRP management activities including integrated weed control, fence and access point maintenance, Condie Pond outlet maintenance, irrigation turns, field office maintenance, addressing trespass and boundary encroachment issues, and dismantling several unauthorized structures and makeshift shelters.
- Conducted bank work to stabilize river bend that approached river corridor boundary.
- Installed pond leveler near an angler access site to prevent road flooding while accommodating beaver and frog habitation.
- Hired and oversaw two AmeriCorps Individual Placements (interns) to help with integrated weed control, general maintenance, and community outreach.
- Hosted six field trips and outreach events for students ranging from kindergarten to university level and nine stewardship projects with students, anglers, and other community members; activities included pulling invasive weeds, planting native vegetation, and harvesting hundreds of willow cuttings for planting at the PRRP and Provo River Delta Project.
- Continued 'Participating Agency' role on planned Heber Valley Corridor EIS to examine transportation needs in Heber Valley. Coordinated with Wasatch County Open Lands Board regarding open space conservation options and potential effects of roadway alternatives to the Heber Valley 'North Fields' area and adjacent PRRP lands.
- Continued internal and external discussions regarding future ownership and management of PRRP lands.
- Assisted with data collection of High Country Fly Fisher's Middle Provo River temperature monitoring study.
- Conferred with Utah Division of Wildlife Resources to develop water level management criteria for Columbia spotted frog; reviewed Jordanelle wetland pond management/maintenance responsibilities with partners.



Repairing PRRP boundary fence



Planting native vegetation



Revegetating to protect PRRP riverbank



Construction to stabilize PRRP river bend



Installing a pond leveler to help prevent road flooding



Condie Pond outlet maintenance and clearing



Water temperature study data collection

Planned Activities

- Confirm and secure land boundaries to facilitate management needs.
- Continue discussions and implement decision making process to determine future ownership and management of the PRRP.
- Continue public outreach to communicate project purposes and benefits and promote community engagement with local schools.
- Continue participating in the Heber Valley Corridor EIS process and coordinating with Wasatch County Open Lands Board regarding conservation easements.



Kindergarteners playing a game to learn about healthy river habitat



Wasatch Elementary students on a field trip at the PRRP



College students learn about river mechanics at the PRRP



Young students plant trees along the PRRP riverbank



Local families were invited on a PRRP "Bug Safari" in August. Children used sweep nets to capture and learn about insects, such as the Red Milkweed Beetle (shown in top photo), found in riverine habitats.



A backwater formed on the PRRP following high snow runoff



Fishing the restored Middle Provo River

DIAMOND FORK WATERSHED

FY2023 Actions and Effectiveness

Instream Flows

- Continued delivery of an updated minimum instream flow regime on Sixth Water and Diamond Fork Creeks that better supports and sustains functional fluvial, geomorphic, and ecological processes in the watershed.

Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Restoration

- Provided funding for ongoing water quality monitoring and flow measurement in Sixth Water and Diamond Fork Creeks.
- Evaluated post-assisted log structures (instream debris catcher) after record spring runoff. Structures were installed by Utah Division of Wildlife Resources with Mitigation Commission support to improve fish habitat along a mile of Diamond Fork River.
- Funded additional Ute ladies'-tresses (a threatened plant) surveys to inform future aquatic and riparian habitat enhancement project designs, methods, and locations.

Diamond Fork Mitigation Area Maintenance

- Funded Utah Division of Wildlife Resources for weed control, fence maintenance, and irrigation system operation at the 172-acre Diamond Fork Mitigation Area.
- Continued working on a plan to assess and potentially improve water delivery and habitat function in the Commission-built wetland system adjacent to lower Diamond Fork River, including developing water level management criteria to benefit Columbia spotted frog habitat. Received an approved water right change to improve flexibility of delivering water to constructed wetlands.
- Repaired Mitigation Area access, which was eroded during high spring flows, by realigning part of the road and installing trench-filled riprap. These techniques preserve aquatic habitat created by the natural flooding process.

Planned Activities

- Design and initiate implementation of additional aquatic habitat improvement measures within lower Diamond Fork to offset impacts from the 2018 Pole Creek fire.



Post-assisted log structure after 2023 spring runoff



Ute ladies'-tresses in Diamond Fork Canyon



High spring runoff flows through braided Diamond Fork channel



Bank area in need of stabilization



Cutoff wall created to control eroding bank

- Continue management and maintenance of Diamond Fork Mitigation Area; test and assess habitat benefits and water use resulting from continuous flow delivery to constructed wetlands.
- Continue public and agency outreach regarding instream flows, habitat enhancement projects, and related actions.



Access road in need of re-routing



2023 high spring runoff with Columbia spotted frog habitat in the background



Newly constructed road segment



Off-channel Columbia spotted frog habitat

STRAWBERRY/DUCHESNE WATERSHED

FY2023 Actions and Effectiveness

Habitat stabilization actions following wildfires continued for many projects within the watershed.

Middle Strawberry River Restoration Project (MSRRP)

Focus continues to be implementing post-fire restoration efforts following the 2018 Dollar Ridge Fire.

- Completed and signed the Finding of No Significant Impact for the Dollar Ridge Fire Restoration Plan, Environmental Assessment and accompanying environmental compliance.
- Completed restoration and maintenance on instream fish habitat and erosion control structures between Strawberry River mile 13 and 15, upstream of the Timber Canyon Road.
- Funded site stewardship, invasive weed control treatments, and upland seeding of 6,210 acres within the burn scar.

Lower Duchesne River Wetland Mitigation Project (LDWP)

- Provided funding to the Ute Tribe for site stewardship, annual work plan development, and vegetation monitoring.

Duchesne River Area Canal Rehabilitation (DRACR) Riverdale North Project Mitigation

- Funded stewardship and invasive weed and tamarisk/Russian olive cut stump treatments on 105 acres within the 2021 East Myton Fire burn scar.

Wildlife Conservation and Management

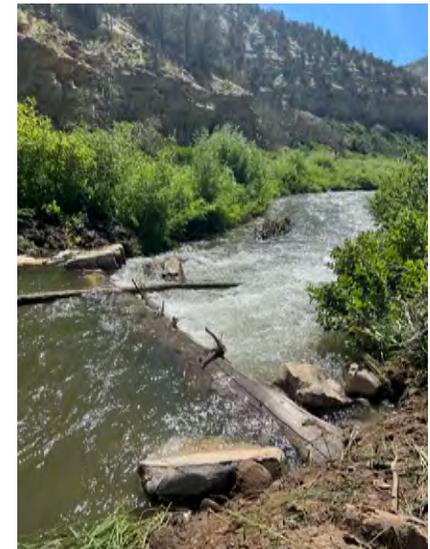
- Completed NEPA work, issued a license agreement, and finalized mitigation requirements that allow for construction of the TransWest Express multistate high-voltage transmission project across CUP Mitigation properties.
- Provided funding to monitor greater sage-grouse populations within the Strawberry Valley.

Public Access and Stream Habitat Enhancements

- Continued management of 51 miles of public angler access easements and facilities on the Duchesne River's West Fork, North Fork and main stem, the middle and lower Strawberry River, Currant Creek, and Rock Creek, which have benefitted from stream and recreation opportunity enhancements.



Dollar Ridge Fire Restoration Plan Diagram



Instream fish habitat and bank stabilization



Work on Strawberry River cross vanes, man-made fish habitat structures that also stabilize streambanks



Monitoring sage-grouse in Strawberry Valley



Lower Duchesne River Wetland Project, Ted's Flat Unit

- Participated as a member of the Interagency Biological Assessment Team (IBAT) to ensure stream flows are maintained to enhance stream habitat and recreation opportunities on these waters as part of Stream Flow Agreements.

Planned Activities

- Transfer over 16,000 acres of Federal properties and appurtenant water rights acquired as CUP wildlife mitigation to the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR). UDWR has been managing the properties on an interim basis since they were acquired.
- Support UDWR plans to acquire a 160-acre inholding within the Tabby Mountain Wildlife Management Area with funds from the TransWest Express Mitigation Account. The parcel is high-value habitat for mule deer, elk, and greater sage-grouse.
- Continue to partner with UDWR for stewardship and habitat improvement projects on CUP wildlife mitigation lands.
- Prepare in-depth, detailed designs for future MSRRP efforts.
- Provide support to the Ute Tribe for continued LDWP maintenance and management, including water delivery and mosquito and weed control.
- Continue to provide funding for invasive weed treatment in preparation for future site restoration plans that will fulfil DRACR mitigation commitments in the Riverdell North mitigation property. Identify and implement measures to minimize impacts to endangered and rare plants from uncontrolled recreation use on the property.
- Monitor and participate in third-party planning actions (i.e., oil and gas development, utility transmission corridors, roads) to ensure habitat values on mitigation properties are protected.
- Continue supporting sage-grouse conservation efforts, sensitive and rare plant conservation initiatives, and the IBAT.



Drone photos of Myton Fire burn scar and areas treated for weeds along the Duchesne River, Riverdale North project mitigation area.



Post Assisted Log Structure constructed to catch instream debris



Section of Strawberry River surveyed by IBAT



Strawberry River hillside erosion following fire, Sept. 2021



Vegetation regrowth and soil stabilization, June 2023.

GREAT SALT LAKE/JORDAN RIVER & STATEWIDE WATERSHEDS

FY2023 Actions and Effectiveness

Jordan River Wetlands Management

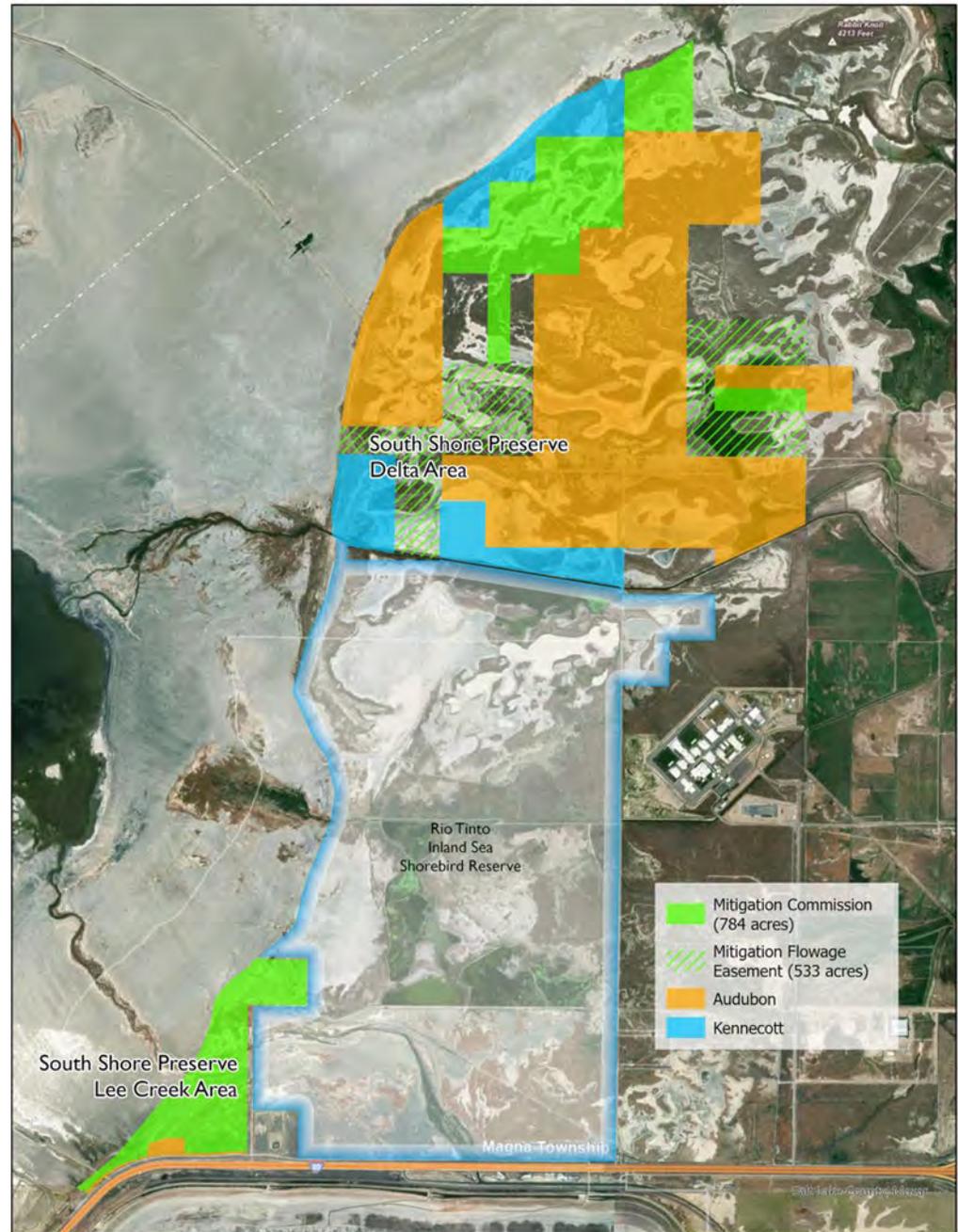
- Worked to build partnerships and stewardship capacity to facilitate transfer of Mitigation Commission-owned Jordan River property to suitable entity for long-term management.
- Provided support to the Jordan River Commission.
- Worked with Utah Forestry Fire and State Lands and other partners to develop an invasive species control strategy for the Jordan River corridor from Bangerter Highway to 7800 South.
- Engaged with stakeholders to conduct stewardship actions and improve Jordan River properties, including tree planting and mechanical weed control efforts that help reduce reliance on herbicides.

Great Salt Lake Wetlands Management

- Provided support and funding to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and National Audubon Society (NAS) for land and water stewardship of the Great Salt Lake Shorelands Preserve and South Shore Preserve, respectively.
- Completed a Draft Environmental Assessment to facilitate transfer of Mitigation Commission-owned South Shore Preserve lands to NAS.

Statewide

- Continued to provide funding and support to Utah Division of Wildlife Resources for native fish conservation efforts, including: genetic analyses of remnant cutthroat trout populations to establish conservation priorities; Bluehead sucker broodstock development at the State Fish Hatchery in Springville, Utah; genetic evaluation of leatherside chub populations to determine species identity and population source; and, restoration of instream flows, habitat protection, habitat restoration, and broodstock development for Southern leatherside chub.
- Continued to support U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conservation and recovery related work on Commission-related projects, including classification work for Ute ladies'-tresses.



Mitigation Commission-acquired lands in the South Shore Preserve

Planned Activities

Jordan River

- Continue management of Commission-owned Jordan River lands.
- Continue building partnerships to facilitate long-term management and eventual transfer of Commission-owned property to suitable entity.
- Continue providing support to the Jordan River Commission and Technical Advisory Committee.



Volunteers plant trees to help restore Jordan River habitat



Fall colors on display along the Jordan River

Great Salt Lake

- Complete Final EA and transfer Mitigation Commission-owned lands within the South Shore Preserve and Lee Creek Areas to NAS.
- Work with partners to restore and manage Great Salt Lake wetland habitats under threat of climate change and reduced water supplies.
- Continue to support and provide funding, as necessary, to NAS and TNC for managing the South Shore and Shorelands Preserves.



Jordan River outdoor classroom



Great Salt Lake South Shore. Photo by John Abraham

Statewide

- Continue providing funding to Utah Division of Wildlife Resources for native cutthroat trout, Bluehead sucker and Southern leather side chub conservation.
- Continue support to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for conservation and recovery related work on Commission-related projects.



Great Salt Lake South Shore Preserve, Lee Creek Area



Bluehead sucker. Photo by Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

MITIGATION COMMISSION OFFICE UPDATE

During FY2023, the Mitigation Commission continued implementing projects to pursue its ongoing mission to accomplish the mitigation and conservation projects authorized in the CUP Completion Act. Work continued on the Provo River Delta Restoration Project, culminating in the Provo River being connected to the restored delta. As progress was made in other areas, the Middle Strawberry River Restoration Project was initiated to address damage stemming from the 2018 Dollar Ridge Fire.

Mitigation Commission staff and Commissioners have been fortunate for the past 29 years to have the support and participation of numerous partners from all levels of government, universities, and non-profit organizations. The Mitigation Commission has approved 335 funding agreements with more than 60 partners since 1994. The back cover of this report lists partners with which we have signed agreements. The total number of partners providing us support over the last 29 years is even greater.

Through FY2023, the Mitigation Commission expended over \$335 million dollars in Utah on fish and wildlife mitigation and conservation actions, including related recreational improvements. Details are included in the financial summary on the following page.

While we are proud of the agency's accomplishments and salute the many partners and supporters that have helped us achieve them, our work is far from over. CUPCA legislation authorized over \$171 million (1991 dollars) of mitigation and conservation work for us to complete. With indexing, over \$80 million of that authorization remains. Our ability to mobilize that funding for its intended purpose to the benefit of Utah's residents and natural resources will depend on future appropriations from Congress.



Provo River Delta Photo by Becca Black

**ANNUAL REPORT FINANCIAL DATA
As of September 30, 2023**

FUNDING

Fiscal Year	Annual Title II/III Appropriations	Annual Title IV WAPA/CUWCD	Annual Title IV Interest	Other	Total
FY 2023	\$5,000,000	\$0	\$3,833,114	\$0	\$8,833,114
FY1994-FY2022	\$162,151,296	\$74,682,374	\$74,422,222	\$40,292,063	\$351,547,955
Total	\$167,151,296	\$74,682,374	\$78,255,336	\$40,292,063	\$360,381,069

EXPENDITURE

Fiscal Year	Annual Title II/III Appropriations	Annual Title IV WAPA/CUWCD	Annual Title IV Interest	Other	Total
FY 2023	\$2,738,380	\$1,109	\$4,187,767	\$5,447,586	\$12,374,842
FY1994-FY2022	\$157,087,939	\$74,681,265	\$66,123,637	\$25,354,664	\$323,247,505
Total	\$159,826,319	\$74,682,374	\$70,311,404	\$30,802,250	\$335,622,347

End of Year Balance of Title IV Account

Fiscal Year	Account Balance	Interest Due *	Total Net Value
FY 2023	\$127,009,410	\$5,113,514	\$132,122,924

*Value of known future interest payments based on distribution from investments in effect as of September 30 of that year.



OUR PARTNERS

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs
U.S. Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Provo Area Office
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Upper Colorado
Regional Office
U.S. Department of Agriculture
APHIS-Division of Wildlife Services
U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Geological Survey
U.S. National Park Service
Ute Indian Tribe
Utah Department of Transportation
Utah Department of Natural Resources
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Utah Division of Parks and Recreation
Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands
Utah Division of Water Rights
Utah Geological Survey
Utah Division of Water Quality
Utah Governor's Office of Management
and Budget
Utah Natural Heritage Program
Central Utah Water Conservancy District
Charleston Water Conservancy District
Duchesne County Water Conservancy District
Fort Field Irrigation Company
Island Ditch Irrigation Company
Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District
Moon Lake Water Users Association

Tooele County
Salt Lake County
Uintah County
Utah County
Wasatch County
Mountainland Association of Governments
Heber City Power and Light
Provo City
Salt Lake City
Sandy City
South Jordan City
Springville City
West Jordan City
Arizona State University
Brigham Young University
Idaho State University
Montana State University
University of Nevada-Reno
University of Utah
Utah State University
Utah State University, Utah Conservation Corps
Utah State University Botanical Center
Center for Documentary Expression and Art
Envision Utah
Great Basin Bird Observatory
Jordan River Commission
National Audubon Society
Great Salt Lake Chapter
River Management Society
The Nature Conservancy in Utah
Trout Unlimited
Trust for Public Lands
Utah Lake Authority
Utah Open Lands