

12/20/15

Feds: Fix Colorado River Problems or We Will

[Click here](#) to read this story by Tony Davis of Tucson Daily Star

[Click here](#) to read this April 8, 2016 article by Dennis Webb of the Grand Junction Sentinel

[Click here](#) to read another story by Tony Davis called "Paris Climate Pact Could Limit Colorado River Runoff Reductions"

[Click here](#) to read this opinion piece by Jonathan Overpeck

[Click here](#) to read this story by Blake Herzog of the Yuma Sun called "Drought Contingency Plans Discussed" (May, 2016)

12/17/15

Oil Prices Tumble To Record Lows

[Click here](#) to read this story by Rudy Herndon of the Moab Sun News

12/13/15

Pumped Beyond Limits: Many U.S. Aquifers in Decline

[Click here](#) to read this story in The Desert Sun by Ian James and Steve Elfers

12/13/2015

Pumped Beyond Limits: Many U.S. Aquifers in Decline

[Click here](#) to read this story in The Desert Sun by Ian James and Steve Elfers

12/04/15

Utah advances hot-button proposal for Lake Powell pipeline

COLORADO RIVER:

Jennifer Yachnin, E&E reporter

Published: Thursday, December 3, 2015

Utah pushed ahead this week on plans to construct its Lake Powell pipeline, a billion-dollar project that could divert more than 86,000 acre-feet of water from the Colorado River to cities in the state's southern end.

The Utah Department of Natural Resources Division of Water Resources filed a preliminary licensing proposal with Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on Tuesday, starting the clock on a 90-day public review of the draft document.

A final application is expected to be filed in April.

Environmentalists who have long criticized the proposed pipeline -- which would stretch from Lake Powell to Sand Hollow Reservoir near Hurricane, Utah -- reiterated their objections this week, asserting that the project would further stress the Colorado River.

"The Lake Powell Pipeline is a complete nightmare," Utah Rivers Council Executive Director Zach Frankel said in a statement. "The biggest proposed diversion of the Colorado River during an epic drought, going to the nation's most wasteful water users, with a staggering price tag, just to keep communities outside Utah from using this water."

The Utah Rivers Council has also disparaged the pipeline based on statistics that show residents of St. George, Utah, who would benefit from the pipeline, currently use about 294 gallons per capita -- about twice the daily water use of people who live in Phoenix; Albuquerque, N.M.; and Denver.

Although the preliminary licensing proposal filed this week does not indicate the final cost of the project -- state officials have suggested it is a \$1 billion project, while environmentalists assert it could cost twice that amount -- critics have also questioned its cost and how the pipeline will be funded.

Washington County Water Conservancy District General Manager Ron Thompson told the Salt Lake Tribune late last month that he is confident water districts will find a way to repay a 50-year loan from the Utah Division of Water Resources by raising either impact fees or water rates.

Thompson also told the newspaper that how and where the pipeline is built -- factors that have yet to be finalized -- could also change the cost of the project by as much as 25 percent.

"Until we know which options they're going to allow us to use, it's a little hard to put a price on this project," Thompson said.

Utah legislators first approved the Lake Powell pipeline project in 2006, and critics note that the Division of Water Resources has already spent \$27 million on the application process.

"Adjusted for inflation, the Lake Powell Pipeline will cost as much as it did to make Hoover Dam operational," Colorado Riverkeeper's executive director, John Weisheit, said in a statement.

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###

MORE INFORMATION

[PRESS RELEASE](#)

[CLICK HERE](#) to read our overview of why the proposed pipeline project is unnecessary

[CLICK HERE](#) to read the prepared documents to FERC

THE INDIVIDUAL FILES ARE COMBINED HERE:

[Preliminary Licensing Proposal \(combined\)](#). UDWR. (large download)

[Draft Study Reports \(combined\)](#). UDWR. (large download)

[MAPS](#) (combined).

[A Performance Audit of Projections of Utah's Water Needs](#). Legislative audit.

Utah Submits Application for Massive Colorado River Diversion

\$2 Billion Pipeline Being Proposed for America's Most Wasteful Water Users

Colorado River, USA: The State of Utah submitted its application today to the federal government for approval of the largest new diversion of water from the Colorado River.

The proposed Lake Powell Pipeline would divert 86,000 acre-feet of Colorado River water for municipal use in Southwest Utah. The multi-billion dollar pipeline would pump this water 2,000 feet uphill across 140 miles of desert to deliver the equivalent annual water usage of 700,000 average Americans to just 180,000 people in St. George, Utah. This water use inequity can be explained by the extremely high water use of St. George lake-powell-pipeline-route residents, who are using 294 gallons per capita/day, roughly twice the water use of Phoenix, Albuquerque and Denver residents, per person.

The proponent of the pipeline, the Utah Division of Water Resources, has spent 8 years and \$27 million on the application and claims the pipeline is needed to prevent St. George from running out of water. Critics are lining up to question this claim:

"The Lake Powell Pipeline is an unnecessary and grotesquely expensive waste of taxpayer money," said former Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Dan Beard. "Southwest Utah has hundreds of alternatives for addressing their future water problems and the justification for the pipeline is based on fictitious and bloated water consumption figures that even the experts at the Utah Legislature dispute."

"The Lake Powell Pipeline is a complete nightmare," said Zach Frankel, Executive Director of Utah Rivers Council. "The biggest proposed diversion of the Colorado River during an epic drought, going to the nation's most wasteful water users, with a staggering price tag, just to keep communities outside Utah from using this water."

"The Lake Powell Pipeline is a billion-dollar boondoggle that would have disastrous environmental impacts on the Colorado River," said Gary Wockner, Executive Director of Save the Colorado. "The Colorado is already stretched to the breaking point – water supplies are at the brink in Las Vegas, Arizona, and Southern California. Taking more water out of this river is completely nonsensical."

Located immediately upstream of the Grand Canyon, the diversion would reduce flows available for fish and wildlife species over hundreds of miles of the Colorado River and make restoration efforts at the Colorado Delta much more difficult. It would also impact the millions of residents throughout the Southwest who are much more conscientious with their water use.

"The pipeline is unfortunate, and incredibly irresponsible considering drought conditions across the West, for Utah to spend billions of dollars to deliver Colorado River water to America's most wasteful water users," said Pete Nichols, National Director for the Waterkeeper Alliance.

The would-be recipients of pipeline water have some of the cheapest water rates in the nation, paying only a small fraction of the price for water that Los Angeles residents pay. These cheap rates explain why St. George has some of the highest per-person water use in the entire U.S.

“Adjusted for inflation, the Lake Powell Pipeline will cost as much as it did to make Hoover Dam operational,” said John Weisheit, Executive Director of Living Rivers the Colorado Riverkeeper. In 1934, there was about 8 million acre-feet of surplus in the Colorado River basin. That surplus vanished in 2003.”

Critics also point to the inflation of water use data by the Division of Water Resources as one of many reasons why the pipeline isn’t necessary, as well as the many inexpensive alternatives which are being ignored. These alternatives are documented in a May 2015 Legislative Audit which found that water conservation is not being implemented as aggressively as many other western cities, including Las Vegas.

For example, while California is trying to reduce water use by 25% this year, Utah is trying to reduce municipal water use by just 1%, even though Utah residents are America’s biggest users of municipal water (per person), according to the U.S.G.S.

The Division is submitting their application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and the decision making process is anticipated to take several years.

“The LPP proposal should be immediately withdrawn. If not, FERC should kill the project,” said Beard.

12/02/15

Lake Powell Pipeline Preliminary Licensing Proposal Documents

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact
Joshua Palmer
jpalmer@utah.gov
801-244-7767

DropBox Access to Lake Powell Pipeline Preliminary Licensing Proposal Documents

Salt Lake City (Dec. 2, 2015) – The Preliminary Licensing Proposal (PLP) documents for the Lake Powell Pipeline project have been submitted to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), but are not yet available on its website. The Division of Water Resources recognizes that several media entities are interested in accessing these files and have story deadlines. The Division anticipated that the files would have been available on the site by now.

As a result, the PLP and study files are now available via DropBox for review. They will remain available until FERC is able to upload the files to their site. We hope that access to these files now will help reporters cover the story and meet deadlines.

Please access the files [HERE](#)

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/h78mem5oangx1ly/AADEph38B297DZXZiAXwLfjaa?dl=0>

11/19/15

Comments for Moab BLM's Master Leasing Plan

[Click here](#) to read comments by Center for Biological Diversity, Living Rivers and Holiday River Expeditions

[COMMENTS](#) of Wilderness Society, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, Sierra Club and Living Rivers

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

[Click here](#) to read Impacts of Fracking on Wildlife Review

[Click here](#) to read Potential Greenhouse Gas Emissions from US Federal Fossil Fuels

11/15/15

Exxon's Research Confirmed Fossil Fuels Role in Global Warming Decades Ago

[Click here](#) to read the complete series, from Inside Climate News by Neela Banerjee, Lisa Song and David Hasemyer

Note: David Hasemyer was raised in Moab, UT and reported on the tar sands development in the Book Cliffs

[Click here](#) to visit Inside Climate News and this special series about Exxon's climate research

[Click here](#) to read the coverage by Inside Climate News in eastern Utah.

11/12/15

Protesters Tell Feds To Keep it in the Ground at Colorado Oil and Gas Auction

[Click here](#) to read this press release from the Center for Biological Diversity

[Click here](#) to read the letter to President Obama, of which Living Rivers is a co-signer.

[Click here](#) to read an OpEd in the New York Times about this 400 member coalition by Lydia Millet

11/11/15

Complaint Accuses County Council Member of Violating Ethics Rules

[Click here](#) to read this Op Ed by John Weisheit in the Moab Times Independent and the Moab Sun News

[Click here](#) to read this story by Molly Marcello in the Moab Times-Independent

[Click here](#) to read this story by Rudy Herndon of Moab Sun News

[Click here](#) to read the COMPLAINT

10/22/15

Citizens of eastern Utah submit letter to Utah's Attorney General on use of CIB funds for proposed coal transport facility in Oakland, CA

The Board of Utah's Community Impact Fund (mineral lease money) is considering the approval of a loan of \$53 million to build a corporate coal transport facility at a port terminal in Oakland, California. And now, Utah representatives and senators, with a nod from the governor, plan to launder the money through a state transportation fund

[Click here](#) to read letter to Utah's Attorney General concerning use of CIB funds for development of a coal transport facility in Oakland, California

[Click here](#) to read this blog by Bill Rau at On The Colorado

[Click here](#) to read 1993 opinion by Attorney General of Utah about CIB funds

[Click here](#) to read 1984 opinion by Attorney General of Utah about CIB funds

[Click here](#) for more information

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PRESS

[Click here](#) to read OpEd by Deseret News Editorial Board: "Coal Port Has Too Many Red Flags."

[Click here](#) to read "Utah Lawmakers Voting to Spend Public Funds on Oakland Coal Terminal; Took \$29,000 from Company that Stands to Profit by Darwin BondGraham of East Bay Express

[Click here](#) to read this story (March 9, 2016) by Christopher Coats of SNL News called Utah Bill Shifts Funding For Oakland Coal Port; Critics Call It Money Laundering.

[Click here](#) to read this OpEd from the editorial board of the Salt Lake Tribune

[Click here](#) to read this story by Molly Marcello in the Moab Times Independent

[Click here](#) to read this story by Darwin BondGraham in the East Bay Express

[Click here](#) to read this story in the Public News Service

[Click here](#) to read this story by Brian Maffly of the Salt Lake Tribune

[Click here](#) to read this story by William Yardley of the LA Times called "How Utah Quietly Made Plans to Ship Coal Through California"

10/22/15

Citizens protest water right extension application of Kane County Water Conservancy for proposed Green River nuclear power plant

[Click here](#) to read Kane County's Extension Application

[Click here](#) to read Heal Utah's protest of Kane County Extension

[Click here](#) to read Uranium Watch and Living Rivers' protest of Kane County Extension

10/13/15

Leading experts call for independent review of Colorado River management program

For immediate release

Contact: John Weisheit - 435-260-2590 (mobile)

Tucson, AZ - As uncertainty mounts surrounding Colorado River water availability, public intellectuals from a wide spectrum of disciplines today called on Interior Secretary Sally Jewell to recruit the National Academy of Sciences to review a six-year old program responsible for informing Colorado River management decisions.

Citing information gaps in surface water variability, water conservation potential, groundwater depletion, ecological deterioration, flood management and water quality, the 23 signatories to the four-page letter warn that absent an independent evaluation, future actions could lead to increased system vulnerability and public expense.

“These experts have devoted considerable time in their careers to improve our understanding of the complexities and fragility of our relationship with the Colorado River, and their recommendation for the National Academy’s involvement could pay dividends for generations to come,” says John Weisheit, Living Rivers/Colorado Riverkeeper Conservation Director.

The letter’s timing comes on the heels of the most recent planning document generated through a joint federal/state, multi-stakeholder process set forth by Congress in 2009. The SECURE Water Act mandates action by Interior as a result of growing climate change concerns. However, as the letter outlines, the work undertaken so far appears to overlook numerous risk factors for this river-dependent society of 36 million people.

The letter further points out that Interior has yet to undertake a sufficient climate change vulnerability assessment for this complex, coupled human-ecological system. Such an assessment should be a prerequisite to the formulation of any climate change response strategies as recommended by the U.S. Global Change Research Program, of which Interior is a partner .

"If ever there was a time to undertake the first basin-wide, independent review of this vital natural resource, that time is now," adds Weisheit. "Decisions should be based on the best available information, and the National Academy is well-positioned to ensure just that."

[CLICK HERE](#) to read the letter from 23 academics to Sally Jewell.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read DOI's response letter of February 9, 2016

Science papers referenced in the letter:

[Understanding uncertainties in future Colorado River streamflow. Vano et al., 2014](#)

[Sustainable water deliveries from the Colorado River in a changing climate. Barnett and Pierce, 2009](#)

[Groundwater depletion during drought threatens future water security in the Colorado River Basin. Castle et al., 2014](#)

[2000 year natural record of magnitudes and frequencies of largest Upper Colorado River floods near Moab, Utah. Greenbaum et al., 2014](#)

[An ecosystem perspective on collaboration for the Colorado River. Adler, 2008](#)

[Mercury and selenium accumulation in the Colorado River food web, Grand Canyon, AZ. Walters et al., 2015](#)

[Click here](#) to read November 1, 2015 OpEd by Jonathan Overpeck

Photo: Lake Mead @ 1078 feet asl.



10/13/15

Scholars Call for National Academy Review on Colorado River Basin Study

[Click here](#) to read the OpEd by the editorial board from the Casa Grande Dispatch

[Click here](#) to read this story by Kyle Roerink of the Las Vegas Sun

[Click here](#) to read this story by Annie Snider of Greenwire

[Click here](#) to read this story by Tony Davis of the Tucson Daily Star

[Click here](#) to read this story by Amy Joi O'Donoghue of the Desert News

[Click here](#) to read this story by Henry Brean of the Las Vegas Review Journal

[Click here](#) to read November 1, 2015 OpEd by Jonathan Overpeck

From The Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — A coalition of scholars across the West is urging the federal government to partner with the National Academy of Sciences to study the future of the Colorado River, including if climate change is leading to reduced stream flow.

Twenty-three scholars from Western universities sent a [LETTER](#) Tuesday to Interior Secretary Sally Jewell detailing their request for more scientific research on a host of issues related to the Colorado River.

Chief among the concerns is if there will be enough water in the river to support 36 million users in seven U.S. states and parts of Mexico over the next 50 years.

The scholars argue the federal government is relying on a projection of a 9-percent stream flow decline by 2060, while skimming over other estimates that suggest it could fall by as much as 45 percent by 2050 due to climate change.

Secretary Jewell was expected to receive the letter early Wednesday. The Bureau of Reclamation this summer issued the results of a nearly three-year study that concluded that there will be significant shortfalls between water supply and demand on the Colorado River over the next 50 years.

But the scholars say in the letter that those conclusions "may be insufficient to accommodate the full range of risks that lie ahead," the letter says.

The scholars who signed the letter include Robert Adler of the University of Utah law school; Victor Baker of the hydrology and water resources department at the University of Arizona; and Tim Barnett at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, California.

Owen Lammers, executive director of Living Rivers and Colorado Riverkeeper, said the federal government needs to pursue a wider breadth of scientific projections to ensure it is prepared for all water flow scenarios. His group supports the scholars' efforts.

"We're hoping for the best when we should be preparing for the worst," Lammers said. "We are really putting society at risk without looking at some of these scenarios."

[CLICK HERE](#) to read DOI's response letter of February 9, 2016

10/08/15

Protesters Tell Feds To Keep it in the Ground at Colorado Oil and Gas Auction

[Click here](#) to read this story by Brian Maffly of the Salt Lake Tribune

[Click here](#) to read Brian Maffly's article of February 14, 2015

On November 4, 2015 the CEO of state-owned energy giant Eesti Energia, Hando Sutter, said the project in the US state of Utah has been stopped and currently there is no business plan in place

[Click here](#) to read the story by Estonia Public Broadcasting

[Click here](#) to visit the website of Estonia Public Broadcasting

[Click here](#) to read this story by Dennis Webb of Grand Junction Sentinel called "Exxon/Mobil Again Retreats from Oil Shale"

10/07/2015

Dams Breached: Flooding in South Carolina

[Click here](#) to read this story by CNN

The rains from Hurricane Joaquin have been called a 1000-year event, and USA Today reminds us [HERE](#) that the USA has had 6 such events since 2010

[Click here](#) to read this LA Times story of "1,000-year flood" at Death Valley in October, 2015

[Click here](#) to learn about devastating floods in the Colorado River basin.

10/01/15

U.S. Oil Sands Submits Water Monitoring Program to State; Begin Production this Winter

November 18, 2015 - [Click here](#) to read and listen to this story by Judy Fahys of KUER public radio ([Article archived here](#))

[Click here](#) to read this story by Molly Marcello in the Moab Times-Independent

[Click here](#) to read the decision to develop a groundwater management plan by Director Baza of UDOGM

[Click here](#) to read USOS's groundwater monitoring plan (September 2015)

[Click here](#) to read Professor Johnson's evaluation of USOS's groundwater monitoring plan

09/08/15

Company Faces \$10K Fine For 2014 Oil Spill

[Click here](#) to read this story by Rudy Herndon of the Moab Sun News

[Click here](#) to read the complaint to Utah Division of Water Quality

[Click here](#) to read the NOV Response letter from Utah Division of Environmental Quality.

09/04/15

Massive Rock Threatening to Crash into Base of Glen Canyon Dam

[Click here](#) to read this story by Felicia Fonseca of the Associated Press

[Click here](#) to view the photos of the canyon wall delamination by Frank Talbott

08/27/15

Comments: FEIS for Moffat Collection System Project

[Click here](#) to read the coalition letter to stop this trans-mountain diversion in the headwaters of the Colorado River

Related news stories:

March 10, 2016 - [Click here](#) to read this story "Despite State Water Plan Local Headwaters Have Growing Claims," by Kevin Fixler of Daily Summit News

July 10, 2015 - Bruce Finley of the Denver Post:
[Colorado shies from big fix as proliferating people seek more water](#)

July 13, 2015 - Brent Gardner-Smith of Aspen Journalism:
[Colorado water committee endorses revised transmountain diversion document](#)

###

Coalition Comment Letter

Rena Brand
Moffat EIS Project Manager
US Army Corps of Engineers
9307 South Wadsworth Blvd, Littleton, CO 80128
By email: moffat.eis@usace.army.mil

June 9, 2015

Re: Moffat Collection System Project (NWO-2002-080762 DEN) FEIS and Section 404 Permit Comments.

Dear Ms. Brand,

I respectfully submit the following comments on the (Permit Application NWO-2002-080762-DEN) Final Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Section 404 Permit, collectively referred to as the "Moffat" project in this document.

I care about the Colorado River. I enjoy visiting the Fraser River and Upper Colorado headwaters in Grand County, Colorado.

There are fatal flaws within the Final Environmental Impact Statement; including inaccurate, inadequate, and misleading analysis that not only skew the potential project environmental and social impacts but, if allowed to happen, could cause irreversible damaging effects to our precious natural resources. Furthermore, this project if allowed to happen, will devastate the Fraser and Upper Colorado Rivers, and cause numerous harms to the fish, people, and businesses that depend on healthy rivers.

The Analysis in the Moffat FEIS Violates NEPA, the National Environmental Policy Act.

The FEIS failed to analyze a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed Moffat project, and the stated purpose and need statement is unreasonably narrow and foreclosed reasonable alternatives to meet future water demand. The FEIS should fully analyze the available feasible and non-speculative alternatives to fulfill the purpose and need of this project.

The FEIS fails to take a hard look at the proposed Moffat project's environmental impacts.

The "environmental baseline" in the FEIS is inflated. The FEIS does not adequately analyze the proposed Moffat project's direct impacts, indirect impacts, and cumulative impacts but, rather, hides or obfuscates the severity of these impacts under an inflated environmental baseline.

Impacts affecting wildlife and habitat which are either not evaluated or not properly mitigated in the FEIS include: the removal and destruction of 200,000 trees, the potential blasting and quarrying of Winiger Ridge and Windy Point at Gross Reservoir, destruction and inundation of Elk wintering habitat specifically identified in Boulder County's master plan, adverse impacts to threatened and endangered species including Whooping Crane, Piping Plover, Least Tern, Pallid Sturgeon, and Western Prairie Fringed Orchid. severe impacts to aquatic life, wetlands, and stream flow in the Upper Colorado basins.

The Corps will violate Clean Water Act Section 404 if it issues a Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit for the Proposed Moffat Project.

Several practicable alternatives to the Moffat Project exist that would have less damaging environmental impacts. The Moffat project would result in significant degradation of the aquatic ecosystem and the FEIS does not include appropriate and practicable measures to minimize potential harms.

The Corps must conduct additional analysis to make a reasoned decision on the Section 404 permit. Additionally:

The FEIS fails to adequately address climate change impacts. There are still questions regarding the FEIS Bypass Flows. Thank you for your recognizing that I, the undersigned, am a critical part of your decision-making process. I would appreciate confirmation of receipt of this letter.

###

08/26/15

Mercury and Other Toxins Contaminating Remote Grand Canyon Segment of Colorado River

[CLICK HERE](#) to read this story by Rebekah Marcarelli of Headlines and Global News

[CLICK HERE](#) to read the science paper by Walters et al.

08/25/15

Utah Groups Join Oakland in Opposing Coal Export Plan

[October 2, 2015 - San Francisco Baykeeper files lawsuit against proposed Oakland Coal Terminal](#)

[Click here](#) to read the press release from the NGO coalition

[Click here](#) to read the letter from the NGO coalition to Utah's Community Impact Board (CIB)

[Click here](#) to read the story in the East Bay Express by Darwin BondGraham

[Click here](#) to read the letter from EarthJustice

[Click here](#) to read why the residents of Oakland are opposed to coal exports

GRAMA REQUESTS

[Click here](#) to read Jeff Holt's email to CIB.

[Click here](#) to read letter from BMO Capital Markets to county commissioners

08/12/15

Living Rivers Comments about Moving Forward Program (Colorado River Basin Study)

[Click here](#) to read our comments about the Moving Forward Program of the Colorado River Basin Supply and Demand Study

[Click here](#) to read our comments of May 13, 2013

08/09/15

EPA Response to Million-gallon Gold King Mine Waste Spill in Colorado Deeply Inadequate

[October, 2015 - Technical Evaluation of the Gold King Mine](#). Reclamation.

[Click here](#) to read this OpEd by Colorado Riverkeeper John Weisheit in the Moab Times-Independent

[Click here](#) to read this article "Navajo Farmers Reject Use of Water After Mine Spill" by Felicia Fonseca of the Associated Press

[Click here](#) to read this OpEd by Lauren Wood in the Salt Lake Tribune

[Click here](#) to read "EPA-caused Contaminated Water Spill from Colorado Mine Causes Concerns in Southeastern Utah" by Jeff Richards in the Moab Times-Independent

[Click here](#) to watch interviews by the Huffington Post

[Click here](#) to read this press release by Center for Biological Diversity.

[Click here](#) to read this article by Jennifer Kovaleski of the Associated Press

07/27/15

Farmers & Tribes with Senior Water Rights vs. Big Cities with Junior Rights

[Click here](#) to read this story by Matt Jenkins of High Country News call "Cities Look to Farms for Help in Colorado River Drought."

[Click here](#) to read this story by Maranne Goodland of the Colorado Independent called "Farms Could Help Solve Colorado's Water Shortage. So Why Aren't They?"

[Click here](#) to read the article in The Guardian by Ryan Bradley called "How I Rented a Piece of a River in a Never-ending Western Drought"

[Click here](#) to read this story called "In Drying Colorado River Basin Indian Tribes Are Water Dealmakers" by Brett Walton in Circle of Blue

[Click here](#) to read this article by Charlotte Weiner called "Along the Colorado River, Ranchers Square-off Against Cities Over Water Rights"

[Click here](#) to read this Associated Press article by Elliott Spagat called "Water Agency's Land Purchase Rattles California Farmers"

[Click here](#) to read "Arizona Swings Closer to Shortage on Colorado River System" by Cary Blake of Western Farm Press

[Click here](#) to read "Shrinking Colorado River is a Growing Concern for Yuma Farmers and Millions of Water Users" by William Yardley of the Los Angeles Times

[Click here](#) to read "Water Grab?" by John Wright of *Parker Live*

[Click here](#) to read "Can Leasing Irrigation Water Keep Colorado Farms Alive?" by Joshua Zaffos in High Country News

[Click here](#) to read this story by Annie Snider of E&E News called "Tribes Hold Wild Card in High Stakes Supply Game"

[Click here](#) to read this OpEd by Hannah Holmes in the Post Independent called "Colorado River Agriculture Under Stress"

07/22/15

Utah Approves Tar Sands Mine, but Requires Water Monitoring

[Click here](#) to read this article in Audubon Magazine by Joshua Zaffros

[Click here](#) to read this story in Indian Country Today by Anne Minard

[Click here](#) to read this OpEd by Dr. William Johnson in the Salt Lake Tribune

[Click here](#) to read science paper by Dr. Johnson et al. called "Potential Impacts to Perennial Springs from Tar Sand Mining, Processing and Disposal on the Tavaputs Plateau, Utah"

[Click here](#) to read "Protesters Disrupt Work at Tar Sands Mine" in the Moab Sun News by Eric Trenbeath

[Click here](#) to read this story in EcoWatch by Michael Sobczak

[Click here](#) to read this story by Brady McCombs of the Associated Press

[Click here](#) to read this story by Amy Joi O'Donoghue of Deseret News

[Click here](#) to read this story by Brian Maffly of Salt Lake Tribune

[Click here](#) to read this story by Katie Valentine of Think Progress

[Click here](#) to read the transcript of the hearing

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State approves tar sands mine but requires water monitoring

By BRADY McCOMBS - Associated Press - Monday, July 20, 2015

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) - Utah state officials have given the go-ahead for a tar sands mine under construction on the eastern flank of the state. They will, however, require the company to do water and air quality monitoring in a move environmentalists are calling a victory.

Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining director John Baza said Monday that his decision addresses concerns raised by opposition while acknowledging that U.S. Oil Sands Inc., the Canadian company building the mine, has complied with regulations.

Baza's ruling, announced late Friday, comes nearly three weeks after he hosted a public hearing to listen to concerns from opponents and give the company a chance to explain a project under construction on a ridge top in the Book Cliffs area on the border of Uintah County more than 200 miles southeast of Salt Lake City.

U.S. Oil Sands must now submit a plan for the monitoring by Nov. 1, Baza said. As long as the company does that, Baza said it will be cleared to move forward with plans to begin extracting oil sands later this year from a sparsely populated area that is home to many types of wildlife such as deer, beavers and bears.

The company already had permission to begin mining under a previously approved plan, but it resubmitted a new proposal for an expanded operation. The company has invested nearly \$100 million over a decade to get permits, buy equipment and develop a new technology.

The company says its process is starkly different than the one used by the numerous operations in Canada, relying on a citrus solvent and plan that is more environmentally friendly and leaves the earth less disturbed. U.S. Oil Sands CEO Cameron Todd said the company plans to comply with all the state's requirements by coming up with a plan to do the monitoring required.

"I'm glad everyone is happy," said Todd, adding the decision is what they expected.

Company officials have said previously there are no measurable quantities of water in the area and that they have gone beyond what is required to show the mine will have a minimal effect on the environment.

Rob Dubuc, an attorney representing the Living Rivers environmental protection organization that has protested the project, called it a pleasant surprise that Baza heeded their warnings about water issues. The area is not only home to wildlife, it is used by hunters and outdoor recreationalists and is home to a few ranching families.

"This is a big deal and it's a step in the right direction," Dubuc said.

"To expect DOGM (Division of Oil, Gas and Mining) to deny the permit is not realistic in this political environment. But at least they are doing the right thing by requiring the monitoring."

Dubuc said measuring effects on water and air quality could help prove whether the company or environmentalists are correct about possible contamination.

Tar sands mines extract oil from minerals in the earth by digging relatively shallow pits, a process that costs more than pumping liquid oil.

07/17/15

U.S. Oil Sands, Inc. Cannot Process Tar Sand Ores Until DOGM Approves Conditions

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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801-440-9094 (cell)

Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining Upholds Tentative Approval of PR Spring Mine Expansion with Conditions

Salt Lake City (July 17, 2015) – Following an informal conference and review by the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining (DOGGM), the division has upheld its tentative approval of the PR Spring mine expansion proposal, but with two new amended conditions.

DOGGM's approval requires U.S. Oil Sands, Inc. to establish a monitoring program and plan for potential effects to the area's subsurface water systems. It must also submit evidence that confirms the mine is in compliance with EPA air quality regulations. Both amendments are to be submitted to DOGGM by Nov. 1, 2015 and U.S. Oil Sands, Inc. is not permitted to process ore until the division has approved both conditions.

"The informal conference held last month was extremely helpful. The feedback we received from concerned individuals helped us determine that these two additional amendments were necessary for the expansion to move forward. I believe the direction we've gone helps mitigate their concerns," said DOGGM Director John Baza. "We're committed to accessing our state's abundant natural resources in an environmentally responsible manner. To ensure responsible mining at PR Spring, we have asked the mine operator to provide more information."

U.S. Oil Sands, Inc. initially obtained a tar sands mining permit in 2012 to mine ore and extract bitumen, a hydrocarbon used to fuel refineries. The approved mine included 213 acres of land on the border of Uintah and Grand counties near Tavaputs Plateau. Last year, the operator submitted a revision to its existing mining plan that would add another 104 acres to its operation. DOGGM held an informal conference late last month under the Utah Mined Land Reclamation Act to hear from those who opposed the expansion.

[Click here](#) to read the transcript of the hearing

[Click here](#) to read the decision by Director Baza of UDOGM

[Click here](#) to read USOS's ground water monitoring plan (September 2015)

[Click here](#) to read Professor Johnson's evaluation of USOS's ground water monitoring plan

07/16/15

What Tar Sands Mining Means for Utah

[Click here](#) to read this Op Ed by Tory Hill in the Moab Sun News

06/29/15

Precedent Setting Tar Sands Mine Subject of 6/30 Public Hearing

[Click here](#) to read this OpEd from the Editorial Board of the Salt Lake Tribune

[Click here](#) to read this story by Amy Joi O'Donoghue of the Desert News

[Click here](#) to read this story by Brian Maffly of the Salt Lake Tribune

[Click here](#) to read this story by Brady McCoombs of the Associated Press

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For Immediate Release

[Colorado River Connected](#) Member Organizations Urging Public Attendance

CONTACT: John Weisheit, Conservation Director, Living Rivers & Colorado Riverkeeper
- 435.260.2590

Salt Lake City, UT - A public hearing on U.S. Oil Sands' proposed expansion of their tar sands strip mining operations near PR Springs in the Book Cliffs is scheduled for tomorrow, Tuesday, June 30. The hearing is being held by Utah's Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining. Member organizations of Colorado River Connected are urging citizens to attend the meeting and share their concerns.

If approved, the total surface disturbance of this revised strip mine would increase 33% from the original large mining application, which was approved previously with little public participation. The new plan proposes to strip mine 235 acres within the corporation's 32,005-acre leased area. Missing from the new operation plan is an acknowledgment of existing springs and seeps in the mining area, which provide drinking water for campers, wildlife, stock animals and nearby local ranchers. The permit application also ignores increasing concerns over air quality within the region. "The approval of this mining operation is a sham," says John Weisheit, conservation director of Living Rivers and Colorado Riverkeeper.

"Ignoring the presence of spring water flowing adjacent to the mining and processing area essentially means U.S. Oil Sands has no regard for public health and safety, and

they are taking advantage of the fact that Utah's regulatory agencies did not mandate them to monitor water pollution in their previously approved large-scale strip mining plan.”

“The degraded air quality in the oil and gas patches of Uintah County is already taking its toll on human health,” says Tim Wagner of Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment. “This new application by U.S. Oil Sands fails to demonstrate what the total emissions will be from their fuel-intensive operations and fails to explain how their emissions will be mitigated, if at all. How many more infant mortalities and poor birth outcomes in Uintah County have to occur before regulatory officials take action to address this serious and existing air pollution problem?”

“Our staff has to follow agency regulations every day to make sure our operations do not make our guests sick,” says Lauren Wood of Holiday River Expeditions. “In fact, our company has to explain in writing how we will safeguard public health and safety. We want to know why Utah agencies are less strident about regulating a very dangerous tar sands mine.”

“U.S. Oil Sands' claim of 'environmental leadership' is utter nonsense,” said Jennifer Ekstrom, producer of the documentary 'Last Rush for the Wild West: Tar Sands, Oil Shale and the American Frontier.' "I made the film to alert the American public about the magnitude of destruction on the horizon if these practices gain momentum in Utah. The massive proposed tar sands and oil shale strip mines are unprecedented in America, and out of step with the needs of humanity.”

Precipitation and snow melt would percolate through the strip mined open pits of waste sand and rubble, which include hundreds of compounds including known carcinogens. These compounds will be liberated by mixing hot solvents and water with raw bitumen ore, and will leach out into the springs and canyon bottoms. Eventually these compounds will reach the Colorado River system, which is drinking water for nearly 35 million people.

LOCATION: Department of Natural Resources, Auditorium, 1594 West North Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah.

TIME: Tuesday, June 30, 2015, 9:00 to 11:00 A.M. in the auditorium of the

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[Colorado River Connected](#) is the coordinating body for organizations committed to protecting the headwaters of the Colorado River system for the benefit of the 35 million people and thousands of species and natural communities that rely on it. We provide a collective voice for the preservation of the headwaters of the Colorado watershed.
Colorado River Connected

06/25/15

Media Advisory: Public hearing on expansion of tar sands mine near PR Springs

CONTACT: John Weisheit, Conservation Director, Living Rivers & Colorado Riverkeeper 435.260.2590

[PDF of Media Advisory](#)

WHAT: Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining (UDOGM) will conduct an informal hearing with interested members of the public concerning the expansion of mining operations by a Canadian corporation called U.S. Oil Sands (USOS). U.S. Oil Sands intends to strip mine and process tar sands near PR Springs in Uintah County. The size of the surface mining operation is 235 acres; the depth of the mine is 150 feet; 2,000 barrels per day of crude will be processed on site. Colorado River Connected coalition members will be present and Western Resource Advocates attorney representing coalition members will testify on the impacts to public health, groundwater, air quality, and wildlife from the proposed expansion and request the Division to reject the permit.

WHEN: Tuesday, June 30, 2015, from 9:00 to 11:00 A.

WHERE: Auditorium of the Department of Natural Resources, 1594 West North Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah.

PUBLIC NOTICE: <http://utahlegals.com/notice.php?id=252555>

FORMAL PROTEST: [PDF DOCUMENT](#)

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06/23/15

Green River Could Boost Industrial Complex Dream

[Click here](#) to read this story by Angus M. Thuermer, Jr. in the Wyoming File

[Click here](#) to read the inventory of Wyoming's proposed reservoir projects from Wyoming File

06/22/15

What's Killing the Babies in Vernal, Utah?

[Click here](#) to read this story by Paul Solotaroff of Rolling Stone Magazine

Related: [Report: \\$28 Million in Methane Gas Escapes Yearly into Utah Air](#)

SALT LAKE CITY – Utah makes a "top five" list for amounts of natural gas being wasted by energy developers working on federal and tribal lands.

A [new report](#) says oil and gas companies need to do a better job of repairing leaks and minimize venting and flaring at well sites, both to conserve natural gas and improve air quality.

Dan Grossman, Rocky Mountain regional director of the Environmental Defense Fund, which commissioned the report, says that's one reason the Bureau of Land Management is releasing new rules this summer for drilling on public land.

"They really haven't been on the forefront in pushing operators to run efficient operations," he maintains. "So, I think it's critical if we're really going to get on top of the emissions problem and the waste problem, that BLM play a critical role in helping us do that."

The report says almost all the oil and gas produced in Utah comes from federal or tribal lands, and values the methane gas wasted in the process at more than \$28 million a year.

In addition to the gas going unsold and the government missing out on royalties from it, the emissions are a major component of ground-level ozone pollution.

Rachel Otto, executive director of the air quality advocacy group Breathe Utah, says the legislature has acknowledged and taken recent action to curb the ozone pollution problems in the state, which are affecting more counties in summer as well as winter.

She sees a push to drill more efficiently as a natural next step.

"Not only would it help clean the air, but also it would create more revenue for these companies and for Utah," she states. "And then, ideally, it would create jobs. So, it seems like a bit of a no-brainer."

Otto says the report brings attention to more rural parts of Utah where air quality is just as bad as along the Wasatch Front but doesn't get the publicity.

The report mentions Duchesne and Uintah counties, both of which made the American Lung Association's list of most smog-polluted areas, along with major cities in California and Texas.

06/12/15

Scientists Call for Moratorium on Oil Sands Development

No new oil sands or related infrastructure projects should proceed unless consistent with an implemented plan to rapidly reduce carbon pollution, safeguard biodiversity, protect human health, and respect treaty rights.

WEBSITE: <https://www.oilsandsmoratorium.org>

The following ten reasons, each grounded in science, support our call for a moratorium. We believe they should be at the center of the public debate about further development of the oil sands, a carbon-intensive source of non-renewable energy.

[The Ten Reasons and the scientists who support this action](#)

05/06/15

Legislative Audit Reveals Flawed Projections on Utah's Water Needs

[Click here](#) to read this story by Amy Joi O'Donoghue in the Deseret News

[Click here](#) to read this story by Brett Prettyman of the Salt Lake Tribune

[Click here](#) to read the legislative audit

[FOX 13 Salt Lake City](#) reported the following:

SALT LAKE CITY – Officials have just released a controversial audit of the Utah Division of Water Resources.

Government officials said legislators from both sides called for the audit after claims the division opposed water conservation for fears it could reduce water revenues for water sellers.

Critics also accuse the division of inflating future water needs to scare the public into spending billions on water projects like the Lake Powell Pipeline and the Bear River Project.

The Utah Rivers Council said the audit comes at a critical time; the Division of Water Resources is asking for billions in tax increases at the Utah legislature for these projects.

A Coalition of groups called for the audit including Utah Rivers Council, Utah Chapter of the Sierra Club, Citizen's for Dixie's Future, Glen Canyon Institute, Taxpayer Association of Kane County, Colorado Riverkeeper Living Rivers, HEAL Utah and Utah Environmental Congress.

The audit from the Utah Legislature found a few key concerns:

1. The division does not have reliable local water use data. The audit stated there were "significant inaccuracies" in the division's data.
2. The division needs an improved process for ensuring water data is reliable. The audit states the Division of Natural Resources should take a leading role in coordinating efforts between the Division of Water Resources and the Division of Water Rights to improve the process of getting accurate water use data.
3. The audit questions the reliability of the division's baseline water use study. The audit states the division's study projecting Utah's future water needs was based on old data from 1992 to 1999, which may not be an accurate representation of Utah's future water needs.
4. Conservation will lead to less water use. The audit questions the division's projected water demand which assumes Utah residents will consume on average 220 gallons per day through the year 2060. The audit says the study used to determine that was based on old data. Also, ongoing water conservation trends will continue which should bring down need.
5. Some regions can reduce water use more than the statewide goal of 25 percent. The audit states that would also lower the projected water need reported by the Water Resources Division.
6. State policies on metering and pricing can affect water demand. According to the audit, Utah's relatively low water cost appears to contribute to higher water use when compared with other states. Unless per capita water use is reduced, new, more costly sources of supply will need to be developed. As pressures on Utah's currently developed supply intensify, local and state policymakers will need to consider policy options to reduce demand, including universal metering and water pricing.

7. Division projections should include expected local water development. The division's projections of future water use do not include growth in the state's water supply beyond what was already developed in 2010, with a few exceptions.

8. Good Basin plans should be the basis for better statewide planning. The audit states most of the division's basin plans do not estimate the growth in the region's water supply. The basin plans also understate the amount of agriculture water available for municipal use. The audit recommends the division update its basin plans on a more regular basis.

The Division of Water Resources sent Fox 13 this response to the audit:

The Utah Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Division of Water Resources (DWR) appreciate the Legislative Auditor General's staff and the considerable efforts they took during the audit process to assess the effectiveness of DWR data practices. We recognize the great lengths they took to gather and analyze the information.

Utah faces a number of complex water-related issues. Not only are we the second driest state in the nation, but our population is expected to double by 2060. Additionally, our water supply is currently used near capacity and will become even more strained moving forward, as our population increases and our climate changes.

The responsibility to ensure Utah's families, environment and businesses have enough water is one DWR takes seriously. Implementing the audit recommendations will strengthen our processes. State water projections are based on water use and supply data reported from hundreds of water providers throughout Utah. The audit revealed differing levels of accuracy within each water provider's reporting can result in the under- or over-estimating of supply and demand reports.

DWR is committed to gathering the most comprehensive and accurate data available. The division will work with the Legislature to propose standardized data collection practices, quality control measures and the authority to hold water providers accountable to report accurate data. Requests for additional resources will be made to the Legislature so water use data can be collected annually, instead of every five years. DWR is also committed to making water conservation one of Utah's long-term ethics. However, the state cannot solve its water challenges through conservation alone. DWR believes a multifaceted water strategy is necessary to meet future growth and to avoid challenges like those currently affecting California.

Utahns are encouraged to meet Gov. Gary R. Herbert's goal of 25 percent water conservation by 2025 and we anticipate meeting that goal this year, ten years early. This effort has led Utahns to conserve approximately 58 billion gallons of water; enough to more than fill Starvation Reservoir. While these results are considered a success, Utah can conserve more. We challenge Utahns to use recommendations provided at SlowTheFlow.org and ConserveWater.utah.gov.

DWRe is currently building phase two conservation strategies that extend beyond the State's initial goal of 25 percent. Future strategies will continue to promote efficiency, educate families and encourage simple life changes. However, they will also introduce programs that further advance Utah's water conservation efforts, including programs to address needed state water facility upgrades; more robust conservation rebates; metering of secondary water systems and enhancements to county and local development landscaping policies.

Finding solutions to tomorrow's water problems requires our attention and resources today. Thankfully the audit has helped identify some of the areas where we can improve, including how and when DWRe data is collected and the future expansion of Utah's conservation efforts. While we are committed to improving these areas, Utah's water challenges will only be solved through collaborative and cooperative relationships between state agencies, the Legislature and dozens of public, private and special interest organizations concerned about Utah's water challenges. By working together we will find the best solutions.

04/23/15

Groups To Host Earth Week Forum & Rally To Raise Awareness on Water Issues

[Click here](#) to watch the video of our community event

[Click here](#) to read this story by the Times-Independent

[Click here](#) to read this OpEd by Sarah Stock of Canyon Country Rising Tide

04/16/15

Earth Week Protest & Events in Moab, Utah Against Threats to Colorado River Watershed

Press Advisory: For immediate release April 15, 2015

[Click here](#) to download the POSTER

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John Weisheit, Living Rivers (435) 260-2590

Sarah Stock, Canyon Country Rising Tide, (435) 260-8557

Earth Week Protest & Events in Moab, Utah Against Threats to Colorado River Watershed Communities & Tribes Up and Down the Colorado River Unite to Protect Our Rivers, Watershed, Health & Environment!

No Green River Nuclear Power Plant and no more Uranium Mining/Milling
Stop Tar Sands Mining in the Book Cliffs & the Oil Industry Onslaught!
FRIDAY APRIL 24, 2015 - 6 pm Community Dinner and Forum (Moab Arts & Recreation Center, 111 E 100 N, Moab, UT)

SATURDAY APRIL 25th - 11 am starting at Multicultural Center, 156N 100W, Moab
Earth Day Parade & Protest to Protect the Colorado River Watershed from Pollution!
Moab, Utah – A large delegation of tribal leaders and Mohave Elders from the Colorado River Indian Tribes will travel hundreds of miles from their home in Parker, Arizona all the way to Moab, Utah to join with local residents during Earth Week to call for a halt to the pollution and water depletion threats to the Green and Colorado Rivers and the entire Colorado River watershed.

Both the Colorado River Indian Tribes and the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe have passed tribal council resolutions opposing the proposed Green River nuclear power plant. These Native Nations who have lived along the Colorado River since time immemorial are alarmed at the prospect of the radioactive threat posed by a nuclear power plant near the Green River which flows directly into the Colorado River. At events in Moab April 24-25, the Colorado River Indian Tribes delegation will join tribal members from the Ute Tribe, White Mesa Ute Community and Navajo Nation and other southern Utah residents who also are threatened by dirty energy production including the explosion of fossil fuel drilling and fracking, the tar sands mine under construction in the Book Cliffs, and uranium mining and milling.

On Friday, April 24th at 6 pm there will be a Community Forum at the Moab Arts and Recreation Center with tribal leaders, Elders, and community organizers confronting dirty energy production and climate change threats to the Colorado River Watershed. On Saturday, April 25th beginning at 11 am at the Multicultural Center there will be an Earth Week rally and parade along Main Street to bring these profound pollution threats to the attention of the thousands of tourists, local residents, businesses and government officials.

Sponsors: Living Rivers, Uranium Watch, Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice, Colorado River Indian Tribes, White Mesa Concerned Citizens, La Cuna de Aztlan Sacred Sites Protection Circle, Canyon Country Rising Tide, Peaceful Uprising, Sierra Club Glen Canyon Group, Clean Up The Mines

04/15/15

An Earth Day Event: Water is Life (No Nukes)

Community Dinner and Forum

DAY ONE - Friday April 24th 6pm:

At the MARC (111 E 1 00 N)

A Discussion with tribal leaders, Elders, and community organizers confronting dirty energy production and climate change in the Colorado River Watershed.

DAY TWO - Saturday April 25th 11 AM:

Earthday Parade

Meet at the Multicultural Center (56 North 100 West)

Walk with us for protection of the Colorado River Watershed.

There will be speakers from Colorado River Indian Tribes and White Mesa Ute Community

An Event by: Living Rivers, Uranium Watch, Greenaction, Canyon Country Rising Tide, Indigenous Action, SUWA Colorado River Indian Tribes, White Mesa Concerned Citizens, La Cuna de Aztlan Sacred Sites Protection Circle, Peaceful Uprising, Sierra Club Glen Canyon Group

Questions? Call Sarah Stock 435 260 8557

[Click here](#) to download the POSTER

04/09/15

Former Reclamation Boss Says Tear Down Glen Canyon Dam

[Click here](#) to read this story by Eric Trenbeath in the Moab Sun News

03/13/15

California Has About One Year of Water Left. Will You Ration Now?

[Click here](#) to read this OpEd by Jay Famiglietti in the LA Times.

03/02/15

The Water Czar Who Reshaped Colorado River Politics: Unite and Conquer

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03/01/15

As the River Runs Dry: An Ongoing Battle Between Urban & Rural Water Users

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02/27/15

James Deacon Noted UNLV Biologist Has Died

[Click here](#) to read this story by Henry Brean of the Las Vegas Review Journal

Photos of Dr. James Deacon are included in this report

02/19/15

Group Challenges Expansion Plan at Utah Tar Sands Operation

[Click here](#) to read this Associated Press story in the Salt Lake Tribune

[Click here](#) to read this story by Amy Joi O'Donoghue in the Deseret News

02/18/15

Legal Challenge to Stop Water Pollution by Tar Sands Mine in Utah

News Release

[CLICK HERE](#) to download the press release as a pdf document

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Legal Challenge to Stop Water Pollution by Tar Sands Mine in Utah

Division of Water Quality Allowing Tar Sands Mine Expansion Without Oversight Despite New Studies Showing Water Pollution Likely

SALT LAKE CITY, UT (February 18, 2015) – In the afternoon of February 17th Western Resource Advocates filed a legal challenge on behalf of Living Rivers against the Utah Division of Water Quality (DWQ) for allowing the U.S. Oil Sands' PR Spring Mine, a tar sands strip mine, to proceed with a four-fold expansion of their mining operation without further review. New studies show that the area of the expanded mine is a recharge zone for perennial springs in Main Canyon, below the mine. Additionally, tests conducted by the company show that diesel range organic compounds in the mine tailings will be thousands of times greater than the maximum contaminant levels allowed in drinking water. Despite the expansion of the proposed mine and the new water pollution evidence, DWQ intends to allow the mine to proceed without a new permit.

U.S. Oil Sands is a company from Alberta, Canada that owns the PR Spring mine located near the Book Cliffs in Uintah County. The Division of Water Quality's existing permit-by-rule allows the PR Spring mine to proceed with ridge-top tar sand mining, processing and disposal in this area without pit liners or monitoring. However, recently completed hydrogeochemistry studies by the University of Utah have shown natural springs in the area are recharged from the area where the strip mine will be expanded. In addition, analysis of process wastes from the mine show that organic compounds in those wastes will be thousands of times greater than levels regulated in drinking water. These tailings have the potential to contaminate springs in Main Canyon, an area renowned for wildlife and the water supply for a ranching operation.

"The State of Utah consistently seems to place development of these dirty fuels above protecting public health and the environment," said lead attorney Rob Dubuc of Western Resource Advocates. "With clear evidence showing that the area of the mine is connected to area seeps and springs, there's simply no justification for DWQ to allow the mine to expand operations without appropriate oversight."

"The Utah DWQ assumes an absence of groundwater in the area, and assumes that the organic compounds leached to precipitation and snowmelt are inconsequential", said Dr. William Johnson of the University of Utah. "Our hydrogeochemical data show that the

ridges, including the permitted site, are where snowmelt and precipitation enters the subsurface to feed perennial springs in nearby canyons. Those who depend on these springs include a ranching family, livestock, recreationalists, and wildlife. The measurements made by U.S. Oil Sands themselves show that the leached concentration of diesel range organic compounds will be thousands of times greater than the maximum contaminant levels that are regulated in drinking water. The State of Utah should genuinely consider potential impacts to this water resource over decades of operation.”

“These petrochemicals from the mine tailings will be extremely hazardous,” said John Weisheit, Conservation Director of Living Rivers. “The scientific evidence is very clear on this point. We need action by the State to protect drinking water and wildlife.”

“With the company’s own tests showing dangerous levels of diesel compounds will be in their waste piles, it’s time for the State to step up and require U.S. Oil Sands to protect these waters,” said Rob Dubuc. “DWQ needs to properly regulate this mine.”

Background: The desired product from the tar sands strip mine is bitumen, used for applications such as to boil water at power generating station, a binder for sand and gravel in paving of roads, and a waterproofing materials for roof construction. If refined the bitumen may be upgraded to become transportation fuel. The energy value of this heavy crude is 50% compared to 97% for conventional light crude. The technology that is proposed for the PR Spring mine is unproven.

[Click here](#) to read this Associated Press story in the Salt Lake Tribune

[Click here](#) to read this story by Amy Joi O'Donoghue in the Deseret News

02/14/15

Study Predicts Future Megadroughts for Western USA

[Click here](#) to read this story by Brooke Hays of UPI

[Click here](#) to read the study

[Click here](#) to visit the web page of AAAS for an excellent interpretation of this study

01/20/15

A Year Without the Colorado River, as Seen by Economists

[Click here](#) to read this story in National Geographic by Sandra Postel

[Click here](#) to read the economic report by Arizona State University

01/09/15

A Think Tank for the Colorado River's Future

[Click here](#) to read this story in National Geographic by Brian Richter.

[Click here](#) to visit the website of the Colorado River Research Group
