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Provo River Delta Restoration Project

Draft Environmental Impact Statement Available for Public Review and Comment

Salt Lake City, UT, February 28, 2014 -A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the proposed Provo River Delta Restoration Project has been released for public review and comment. The Draft EIS can be downloaded from the project website at <http://www.provoriverdelta.us>, or by requesting a copy on CD from Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission (Mitigation Commission), at 801-524-3146. Public comments will be accepted on the Draft EIS until May 7, 2014.

The Draft EIS was prepared by the Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission (Mitigation Commission), U.S. Department of the Interior's Central Utah Project Completion Act Office (Department of the Interior), and Central Utah Water Conservancy District (CUWCD), working cooperatively with the June Sucker Recovery Implementation Program.

The Provo River Delta Restoration Project is proposed as an essential action needed to recover the endangered June sucker that occurs naturally only in Utah Lake and its tributaries. In the early 1990s, the lower Provo River was almost dry during summer months, with very little flow from upstream and only some backwater from the Lake itself. Since 1994, however, significant amounts of water have been purchased and released into the river channel to support June sucker recovery efforts. This has resulted in successful spawning of June sucker in the Provo River, but larval fish do not successfully return to Utah Lake due to extensive habitat modification. Continued loss of these larval June sucker is a major obstacle preventing recovery of the species.

The Provo River Delta Restoration Project proposes to address this issue by restoring functional habitat conditions in the lower Provo River and its interface with Utah Lake that are needed for spawning, hatching, larval transport, survival, rearing and recruitment of young into the population on a self-sustaining basis. Under every action alternative considered in the Draft EIS, the Provo River would be realigned north of its present location, beginning approximately 1.5 miles upstream of its confluence with Utah Lake.

The Draft EIS analyzes alternatives for project implementation and identifies impacts that would result from the proposed project. Alternatives include measures that facilitate recovery of the June sucker and meet the project need, while minimizing impacts on private property owners and the local community. According to Mark Holden, Projects Manager for the Mitigation Commission, "The Preferred Alternative in the Draft EIS represents a real compromise, and a very viable project for recovery of June sucker." Prior to release of the draft EIS, more than a dozen conceptual ideas were considered by cooperating agencies.

“We are pleased to be able to provide the public this opportunity to review and comment on the Draft EIS. We have taken about two years longer than we originally estimated to get to this point, but we believe the extra time spent with landowners, business owners, and others in the local community was well worth it. Their input has made this a better project and a better document,” said Michael Weland, Executive Director for the Mitigation Commission.

Continued management and future use of Provo River water is closely tied to the recovery of the June sucker. June sucker recovery will reduce risks to water supply reliability and result in an improved ecosystem for all those who use Utah Lake. “It has all the makings of a ‘win-win’ solution,” said Reed Murray, Program Director for the Department of the Interior.

A public meeting will be held Wednesday, April 2, 2014 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at Provo City Recreation Center, 320 West 500 North, Provo, Utah. The purpose of the public meeting is to provide the public and other interested parties the opportunity to ask questions and provide comment on the Draft EIS. The format of the meeting will be an open-house type format. “We realize there are still some issues and concerns to be addressed regarding the proposed project, and we want to hear about those from the public so we can try to resolve those too,” said Gene Shawcroft, Deputy General Manager of the CUWCD.

A Notice of Intent to prepare the Provo River Delta Restoration Project Draft EIS was published in the Federal Register on March 16, 2010 (75 FR 12562). The Draft EIS describes and analyzes the potential effects of three action alternatives, a no action alternative, and two options for the existing Provo River channel.

Written comments should be received no later than May 7, 2014 to ensure inclusion in the administrative record. Under the National Environmental Policy Act process, written and oral comments, received by the due date, are given the same consideration. Copies of the Draft EIS are available for review and inspection at:

- Department of the Interior, Central Utah Project Completion Act Office, 302 East 1860 South, Provo, Utah 84606-7317
- Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission, 230 South 500 East Suite 230, Salt Lake City, Utah 84102
- Central Utah Water Conservancy District, 355 West University Parkway, Orem, Utah 84058-7303
- Provo City Public Library, 550 North University Avenue, Provo, Utah 84601
- Salt Lake City Main Public Library, 210 East 400 South, Salt Lake City, Utah 84111

For more information, visit the project website at www.provoriverdelt.us.

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