

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS RESTORING PROVO RIVER DELTA

Utah County, UT – Federal agencies are holding a public scoping meeting Thursday, March 25 from 6 PM to 8 PM at the Utah Lake State Park to seek public participation in and discuss possibilities for restoring the ecosystem of the Provo River delta as part of the June Sucker Recovery Implementation Program.

The Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission (Mitigation Commission), U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), and Central Utah Water Conservancy District (CUWCD) are in the earliest stages of identifying the best way to restore, create and enhance the ecological character of the historic Provo River delta and Utah Lake interface as a means to aid recovery of the June sucker, a federally listed endangered fish native to Utah Lake.

The lower Provo River is the only known spawning location for June sucker in its native habitat, and was designated as critical habitat when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed June sucker as an endangered species. The Mitigation Commission, DOI and CUWCD are responsible for creating conditions necessary in this area for spawning, hatching, larval transport, survival, rearing and recruitment of June sucker to the adult stage. This could be accomplished by developing a new channel, which would provide suitable instream habitat and sufficient gradient to transport young fish to a developed bay, or delta, at Utah Lake with depths and vegetative cover suitable for June sucker rearing and recruitment.

Four possible locations for implementing this project have been investigated so far; locations are limited because of the nature and orientation of the Provo River and Utah Lake. Preliminary results indicate the most likely approach, ecologically and logistically, would be to create and restore conditions to the north of the existing lower Provo River channel, west of 3100 West. Although each potential layout for the channel and delta would be similar in many ways, there could be differences due to size, orientation, etc. as influenced by land ownership, transportation needs and other factors.

The meeting will begin with a presentation of the purpose and need for this project; however, the remainder of the time will be spent in an “open house” format – with posters, pamphlets and agency representatives on hand to answer questions. An equally important part of the meeting is

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to give the public an opportunity to express and help identify issues and project alternatives, which will be considered and analyzed in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

An EIS is a document required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for federal government agency actions "significantly affecting the quality of the human environment." A tool for decision making, an EIS describes positive and negative environmental effects of proposed agency action, and alternative actions.

NEPA is designed to involve the public and gather the best available information so decision makers can make fully informed choices. The process includes the following steps: *Scoping*: When a project is first proposed, an agency(s) announces it with public notices and letters to people who are likely interested. The public is asked to provide comments helping the agency identify issues it must address in the EIS (this is where we are now with the Provo River delta restoration project). *Draft EIS*: The agency prepares a draft EIS with a description of the affected environment, a range of alternatives, and an analysis of each alternative's impacts. The public is then provided a second opportunity to provide comments. *Final EIS and Proposed Action*: Based on draft EIS comments, the agency writes a final EIS, and announces its Proposed Action. *Record of Decision*: The agency issues a Record of Decision, which documents its final action prior to implementation.

The Mitigation Commission is an independent Federal agency established by the Central Utah Project Completion Act of 1992. The Commission is responsible for planning, funding, and implementing projects that benefit fish, wildlife, and related recreation resources in order to offset impacts caused by the Central Utah Project, and other Federal water reclamation projects in Utah. The Commission meets publicly to consider and act on agreements to carry out mitigation projects with various partners, including State and Federal natural resource agencies and non-profit groups.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: See attached notice and handout