

JORDAN RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL
Core Council Annual Meeting Minutes
August 5, 2010

Attendance:

Tom Holstrom; Central Valley Water Reclamation
Karen Nichols; HDR
Mike Bradley; IHI Environmental
Steve Raabe; OpinionWorks (Annapolis, MD)
Lynn Berni; Salt Lake County
Steve Burgon; Salt Lake County
Kathlyn Collins; Salt Lake County
Matt Ferguson; Salt Lake County
Jacob Green; Salt Lake County
Alex Hamilton; Salt Lake County
Marian Hubbard; Salt Lake County
Rich Judson; Salt Lake County
Hazen Mascaro; Salt Lake County
Matt Schulz; Salt Lake County
Trever Swensen; Salt Lake County
Larry Thomas; Salt Lake County
Bob Thompson; Salt Lake County
Dale Timothy; Salt Lake County
Robert Velasquez; Salt Lake County
Ron Lund; Salt Lake Valley Health Department
Dennis Pay; South Salt Lake
W.D. Robinson; UDAF
Jim Baird; UDOT
Carl Adams, UDWQ
Hilary Arens, UDWQ
Betsy Herrmann; USFWS

Housekeeping

- Marian Hubbard requested updated contact information for JRWC members, and a question as to whether advisory group meetings should be continued.

2010 Watershed Public Opinion Survey

- Steve Raabe of OpinionWorks, based in Annapolis, Maryland, presented results of the public opinion telephone survey conducted by his firm on behalf of Salt Lake County.
- The overview of findings was as follows:
 - This research shows a public that is heavily engaged with the outdoors, and places a high priority on clean water. In a variety of ways in the survey they indicate support for more action by the County to promote watershed health. These are our high-level findings:
 - Most County residents see outdoor recreation and leisure as an essential element of their quality of life. Many are getting out into the County's wild areas and urban parks on a frequent basis.
 - Residents are not confident about their knowledge of watershed issues, and in fact they demonstrate some lack of specific knowledge. As the most striking example of this, only 13% believe they live in a watershed. The survey reminds us that outreach to residents must be conducted in a non-technical way, appealing instead to the basic priorities and values of residents.
 - On balance, the County is environmentally-minded. Care for the environment is a strong personal priority for one-third of County residents, twice as many as say it is a low priority for them. A majority of residents place themselves in the middle of the environmental spectrum.

- In particular, water quality is far and away what residents most value in their watersheds – exceeding the value residents place on wildlife habitat, recreation, scenery, and economic concerns combined.
 - Similarly, residents’ top three watershed-related concerns among a list of eight we tested are an adequate supply of good drinking water, litter in streams, and industrial water pollution. Wildlife habitat is next, followed by recreational and open space concerns.
 - A large majority believe that a healthy economy depends on good water quality, suggesting that most County residents do not see a tradeoff between jobs and the environment, at least as far as clean water is concerned. A similar majority of two-thirds do not believe that water quality standards should be lowered to promote economic development.
 - But the economy is a reality, and a near-majority of residents indicate that cost must be taken into account when addressing water quality concerns.
 - By almost two-to-one, residents do not believe their own recreational activities are affecting the County’s watersheds. This is particularly true of both the strongest environmentalists, and those most antagonistic to environmental concerns. People in the middle are most prone to admit their own impact.
 - Most residents believe the County “probably is doing enough to protect our watershed,” a number that has risen significantly since 2007. But a solid one-third of residents want the County to take more action.
 - In terms of land use, there is strong citizen support for fostering more wildlife habitat, river corridors in their natural condition, and open space and wetlands in the County. A near-majority would like more outdoor recreational opportunities, as well, a number that has risen by double digits since 2007.
 - There is solid awareness of water quality concerns in the Jordan River, but only about half of those who are aware of that know that the river is “impaired and a plan is underway to clean it up.”
 - Large majorities support each of four public policy proposals that would require landowners to maintain and plant new buffer vegetation, set aside natural open space, and make capital improvements to manage runoff. The fact that the public is ready to support these mandatory measures indicates an underlying public will to deal with watershed protection.
 - There is strong public support for more funding to deal with watershed protection, as well, with nearly three-quarters saying they would support more funding if the amount was reasonable and County leaders said it was needed. Bonding appears to be the specific funding mechanism that garners the broadest support.
 - This survey provides guidance about the subgroups within the overall population that are most receptive to messages and engagement around these issues. Our report identifies the pockets of opportunity for watershed-related messages, as well as the specific media that will deliver those messages most effectively.
- Of note, tracking changes in attitudes from the survey conducted in 2007 (by Dan Jones & Assoc) revealed that many responses on the 2010 survey showed a decline from 2007. Mr. Raabe commented that perhaps the economy was one factor; the trend will be further explored in the final report to be prepared by OpinionWorks.