

# the Watershed Watch

Newsletter of the Salt Lake County Watershed Planning & Restoration Program

Fall 2015, Issue 13

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## New & Noteworthy

JRWC Meeting  
January 12th, 2016 @  
10:00AM Salt Lake County  
Building Room #N3-930

“Years of Living Dangerously”  
Free Film Series at Main  
Library Auditorium  
1st Thursday of the month  
November 2015- March 2016  
Hosted by SLC Green  
<http://www.slcgov.com/slcgreen/yold>

Winters Farmer Market  
Rio Grande, Salt Lake City  
Every other Saturday  
November - April



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[slco.org/watershed](http://slco.org/watershed)

## Trees, Glorious Trees

Discover the role trees play in managing stormwater, reducing flood impacts and improving water quality in our watershed

*by Watershed Planning & Restoration  
Program staff*

Trees as far as the eye can see, forested public lands cover almost 50% of Salt Lake County today. They stand tall above the streams and across open fields swaying their leaves across the water and land, interlocking their branches between one another to form massive canopies. These canopies dissipate the sweltering heat of a summer day while the sunlight dances beneath them, as if it was reflecting off of a thousand tiny well placed mirrors. However these mirrors are merely

leaves twisting and bending with a soothing push of an afternoon breeze allowing singular columns of sunlight to penetrate the canopy with quick bursts. Each tree is vital to the health of the watershed offering a multitude of benefits including: slowing stormwater runoff; improving air quality; minimizing channel erosion; improving soil and water quality; and providing habitat for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife.

Trees diminish potential storm water runoff and flooding by intercepting falling rain through their canopies

*(continued on page 2)*



*Big Cottonwood Creek*

and reducing the amount of water that finds its way to the soil. Tree roots consume water from the soil allowing the soil to store more water and potentially lengthen the time before rainfall becomes runoff. The root zones help water infiltrate deeper into the soil and the leaf litter acts as water storage. Besides holding water and slowing runoff, trees improve air quality by absorbing pollutants like carbon monoxide (CO), carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) and other particulates out of the atmosphere. They help reduce air temperature, decreasing the energy used to cool homes and businesses in turn lowering power plant emissions.

Trees play a larger role beyond slowing runoff and improving air quality. They are an integral part of curtailing stream channel erosion and improving soil and water quality. The trees in the riparian zone prevent erosion by stabilizing stream banks with their root systems as well as substantially dispersing the energy of rain drops that hit the soil which can exacerbate

erosion. Tree roots act as filters removing, sediments and pollution like nitrogen (N), metals, pesticides, and solvents from the stream while providing habitats for terrestrial and aquatic wildlife. A single tree can provide habitat for multiple organisms while producing food supplies, breeding and migratory corridors. Their leaf litter (branches, leaves, fruits and flowers) provide the building block for a healthy food web. Trees also regulate the summer air and water temperatures in and along the streams, which is critical to the survival of many aquatic species that live in our watershed.

Although trees are often overlooked it is important to understand that each tree plays a pivotal role in our everyday life in Salt Lake County. Whenever possible, protect woodlands and mature native trees in your landscape, especially along the riparian corridors. As Franklin D. Roosevelt once said “Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people.” □

## Definitions

**Dissolved oxygen:** Dissolved oxygen (DO) refers to microscopic bubbles of gaseous oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>) that are mixed in water and available to aquatic organisms for respiration—a critical process for almost all organisms. Primary sources of DO include the atmosphere and aquatic plants.

**Leaf litter:** Material forming a surface-covering layer, in particular decomposing but recognizable leaves and other debris forming a layer on top of the soil, especially in forests.

**Riparian zone:** Riparian zones are ecosystems located along the banks of rivers, streams, creeks, or any other water networks. Usually riparian zones are narrow strips of land that line the borders of a water source.



*Big Cottonwood Creek*

# Discovering the Jordan River

A look at the Jordan River through [myjordanriver.org](http://myjordanriver.org)

by Salt Lake County Watershed Planning & Restoration staff

The *My Jordan River* website is a product of a collaborative partnership among the Jordan River Commission (JRC), the Center for Documentary Expression and Art (CDEA), and Salt Lake County Watershed Planning and Restoration. Funded through the Environmental Protection Agency's Urban Waters Small Grants program, *My Jordan River* uses smartphone technology and crowd-sourced content submissions to turn the Jordan River Parkway Trail into a nature center without walls.

Content for *My Jordan River* has been contributed by community members, the JRC, the CDEA, students from West High School, and the Salt Lake Center for Science Education as part of CDEA's Reawakened Beauty - Exhibits that Teach program that explores ecosystems and environmental issues through an 8-week high school curriculum.

Using *My Jordan River* is easy! Just follow these three simple steps...

1. Visit [www.myjordanriver.org](http://www.myjordanriver.org) on your mobile device or computer.
2. Discover exciting stops along learning paths throughout the Jordan River Trail.
3. Choose your favorite places, bookmark them for your next visit, and share with your friends.

Contribute your voice. *My Jordan River* invites all interested members of the public to contribute their experiences to *My Jordan River* for publication. Just navigate to My River in the main menu to upload a photo and story.

You can submit more complex content (video, audio, multiple photos, etc.) by visiting [www.myjordanriver.org/](http://www.myjordanriver.org/) dashboard on your desktop computer.



Jordan River kayaking Photo by: Hannah Murphy

Examples of possible submissions include:

- Oral histories or interviews
- Video or multi-media essays
- Photo essays
- Sound essays
- Short articles on history, ecology, or watershed issues
- Personal or historical maps
- Walking, bicycling, skating or horseback tours
- Personal stories that relate to the River

Discover more about the Jordan Rivers ecology, community, history, recreation, water, any upcoming events and connect with other river lovers through [www.myjordanriver.org](http://www.myjordanriver.org). □



Jordan River in Winter Photo By: Adrian Boogard



The 2015 Watershed Symposium in its ninth year broke attendance records with an average of 250 people per day. The Symposium included two remarkable keynote presentations delivered by Dan McCool and Pat Shea. An outstanding panel discussion on the management of watersheds in times of climate uncertainty.

Twenty-four breakout sessions were presented covering a variety of topics from the future of Utah's water supply to recreation in the wasatch watershed, and concluded with an awards ceremony bestowing a Watershed Symposium belt buckle to all the winners of the peer-voted honors.

Please visit [www.facebook.com/Salt-Lake-County-Watershed-Planning-Restoration](http://www.facebook.com/Salt-Lake-County-Watershed-Planning-Restoration) for pictures from the Symposium and updates on the 10 Year Anniversary Watershed Symposium next year. Hope to see you there.

# Don't Leave the Leaves

We all live downstream

by Salt Lake County Watershed Planning & Restoration staff

**K**eeP leaves out of the streams and the rivers by keeping them off the streets and away from storm drains.

## Rake them up, not out

Although leaves are "natural" and harmless, excess leaves can pose a threat to the health of our creeks and rivers by decreasing the dissolved oxygen (DO) during their decomposition in the water. Leaves in the gutters of our houses will eventually be crushed by people and cars and when mixed with storm runoff they create a rich "nutrient tea" that flows along the fast track of storm drains to our creeks and the Jordan River.

Once the leaves get into these waterbodies they begin to decay and release nutrients that contribute to the green algae seen in our creeks and rivers. The excessive decomposing leaves and algae makes recreation unpleasant, and uses up essential DO in the water which can suffocate many of the creeks and rivers inhabitants.

These excessive leaves that we find in our street gutters are an abundant

problem that can be solved and avoided. Here are some watershed-friendly alternatives to raking leaves into the street so we can reach the goal of minimizing the excessive amount of leaves making it into the creeks and rivers:

- Compost leaves for a nutrient-rich fertilizer for your gardens.
- Use a mower to chop leaves into small particles and apply directly to your lawn to enrich it. (this is called top-dressing)
- Use chopped leaves as winter mulch for your flower gardens.
- Bag up the leaves and drop off bagged leaves at any of the Salt Lake Counties drop off locations. <http://www.slco.gov/slcogreen/specialcurbside>

Everyone can participate. The distance between our yards and the water's edge is as close as the nearest storm drain. Keeping leaves off of our streets is an important act of protection for our watershed.

### Helpful Link:

<http://wasatchfrontwaste.org/index.php/seasonal-additional-services#leaf-collection> □



*Look familiar? This is a common occurrence in fall. Leaves end up in the storm drains across the county and contribute to the low DO problems in the Jordan River*