

Executive Water Task Force  
Report of Activities  
Natural Resources Interim Committee  
October 20, 2010

The Task Force met 8 times during the summer of 2010. The task force heard reports and held discussions on many issues related to water rights, water delivery, and water management:

1. Canal Safety was discussed and reports were heard on the implementation and effectiveness of recent legislation designed to improve response and coordination to canal safety issues. A new organization, The Utah Irrigators Association, has been formed partly to address the issues raised by the canal safety, and canal liability issues. The President of this new association, Troy Rindlisbacher has been appointed as a member to the Executive Water Task Force.
2. Water Banking and the proposed bill of Rep. Jack Draxler was discussed at some length. This discussion led to a more intensive look at conjunctive management and the tools already in place to allow for balance of surface and underground water interests. It was reported there is a pending Utah Supreme Court decision that will weigh in on this subject. The consensus of the task force was to back off on any recommendations for action on this subject for the time being.
3. Aging Water Infrastructure was the subject of a report by Dennis Strong and the Division of Water Resources. It was reported that since the 2005 “Water Delivery Financing Report” was finished, the costs have gone up substantially as have the needs.
4. State Engineer Kent Jones presented his ideas about beneficial use and led a task force discussion on maximization of the beneficial use of water.
5. Five proposed Bills were given a positive recommendation for legislative consideration:
  - A. A bill creating a process for replacement of lost water shares. (Okerland sponsor)
  - B. Two bills cleaning up technical language in water statute (Dayton and Draxler sponsors)
  - C. Two local district code clean up bills. (Stowell sponsor)
6. Two competing bills, last year’s SB 99 and a new bill by Senator Stowell were considered. They took different points of view from current statute presenting opposite points of view. After deliberation, the task force voted unanimously to support current statute on this issue and not support either of the competing bills. It was stated by task force member, Steve Clyde, we have “an uneasy balance” in current statute that we can live with. That was the consensus of the task force members in the end.
7. Deputy Director Boyd Clayton gave a presentation summarizing task force discussions about the limits of beneficial use. It was pointed out that irrigators cannot expand their acreage just because technology allows them to spread the water further since this practice will likely hurt other water users.
8. The task force would like to be re-authorized by the legislature for 2011. There is no fiscal note since all task force members generously donate their time.