

MT NEBO WATER AGENCY
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
Spanish Fork City Library, Heritage Room, 80 S Main Street, Spanish Fork, Utah 84660
Tuesday, July 1, 2025

CONDUCTING Paul Taylor, Chair

BOARD MEMBERS Bart Leeftang, Central Utah Water Conservancy Dis.
Neil Brown, Genola City
Braden Sheppard, Goshen Valley Local District
ABSENT-Brett Christensen, Payson City
Paul Taylor, Salem City
ABSENT-Lynn Mecham, Santaquin City
Kevin Oyler, Spanish Fork City
Boyd Warren, Strawberry High Line Canal Co
Sterling Brown, Strawberry Water Users Assoc.
Richard Nielson, Utah County

ALTERNATE BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT-Gerard Yates, Central Utah Water Conservancy Dis.
ABSENT-Curtis Thomas – Genola City
ABSENT-Paul Munns – Goshen Valley Local District
David Tuckett, Payson City
Bradey Wilde, Salem City
Art Adcock - Santaquin City
Cory Pierce – Spanish Fork City
Marty Larson, Strawberry High Line Canal Co.
ABSENT-Lynn Swensen, Strawberry Water Users Assoc.
ABSENT-Glen Tanner, Utah County

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE Roger Pearson, Central Utah Water Conservancy Dis.
ABSENT-Chris Steele, Genola City
Melanie McVicker, Goshen Valley Local Dis.
Travis Jockumsen, Payson City
Bradey Wilde, Salem City
Norm Beagley, Santaquin City
Cory Pierce, Spanish Fork City
Marty Larson, Strawberry Highline Canal Co
Sterling Brown, Strawberry Water Users Assoc.
Richard Nielson, Utah County

STAFF Kim E. Holindrake, Payson City Recorder

OTHERS

Steve Clyde, Clyde Snow (online)	Amelia Powers Gardner, Utah County Commission
Steve Jones, Hansen, Allen & Luce	Doug Welton, Utah House of Representatives
Kathryn Floor, Hansen, Allen & Luce	Bruce Ward, Central Utah Water conservancy Dis.
Brandon Gordon, Utah County	Holly Sweeten, Office of Congressman Burgess Owen

Mike McKell, Utah State Senate
Skyler Beltran, Utah County Commission
John Waters, Spanish Fork City
Jon Lundell, Santaquin City

Chris Thompson, Hansen, Allen & Luce
Stephanie Gricius, Utah House of Representatives
Laurel Price, Utah County Commission Staff
Jenney Rees, Office of U.S. Senator John Curtis

1. Call to Order

Chair Paul Taylor called this meeting of the Mt Nebo Water Agency Board to order at 12:25 p.m. and thanked everyone for attending. The meeting was properly noticed.

2. Introductions

Those attending introduces themselves.

MOTION: Kevin Oyler – To allow Paul Taylor to adjust the agenda as needed. Motion seconded by Richard Nielson. Those voting yes: Bart Leeftang, Neil Brown, Braden Sheppard, Dave Tuckett, Paul Taylor, Art Adcock, Kevin Oyler, Boyd Warren, Sterling Brown, Richard Nielson. The motion carried.

3. Purpose and Function of the Mt. Nebo Water Agency (12:27 p.m.)

Melanie McVicker reviewed the mission statement of Mt. Nebo Water Agency (MNSA) that states, Mt. Nebo Water Agency works to protect and preserve precious water resources for the benefit of present and future agricultural, residential, municipal, and industrial users, and to plan for water supplies needed to sustain population growth and economic expansion within the Agency boundaries. Members include Central Utah Water Conservancy District, Goshen Valley Local District, Payson City, Spanish Fork City, Salem City, Utah County, Santaquin City, and Genola Town. Non-members include Strawberry Highline Canal Company and Strawberry Water Users Association. MNSA was created in 2014 under an interlocal agreement with eight purposes.

- Plan, design, develop, construct, own and/or sponsor projects and related facilities.
- Operate, administer, manage, repair, and replace the same, as necessary.
- Facilitate the transfer and distribution of agricultural water and municipal water to its members and to non-member contracting entities for delivery to their respective customers, shareholders, and contracting parties.
- Enjoy economies of scale and other benefits made possible through the joint and cooperative action of the members.
- Inventory water rights, water supplies, facilities, and other resources that might be employed to meet water supply needs, provide for agriculture, and preserve the natural environment.
- Plan for future water supplies within the agency service area, or any additional area served by the Agency through agreements entered under the Act.
- Provide a forum in which water use, management, and conservation affecting member agencies can be coordinated within the Utah Lake-Jordan River Basin.
- Prepare, update, and implement an agricultural water preservation plan for agricultural areas in the agency service area. She noted that Goshen Valley has 12,000 acres of irrigated crop land that produces alfalfa, corn, and wheat that feeds the livestock for two large dairies and a poultry farm that produce ice cream, cheese, eggs, yogurt, and milk.

4. South Utah County Water Demands and Infrastructure (12:37 p.m.)

a. South Utah County Population Projections

Cory Pierce reviewed population growth from a Mountainland Association of Government's 2015 study that showed in 50 years Utah State would grow by 94% (5.8 million) and Utah County would grow 177% (1.6 million). The message is that growth is coming, which is a concern as municipalities and water users. The south Utah County (Springville and south) projected population growth goes from 2020 at 160,000 to 2065 at 523,000. MNWA is looking at using water wisely and conservation.

d. Strawberry Valley Project

Sterling Brown reported the Mormon settlers arrived in Utah in July 1847 (178 years ago). Shortly after their arrival, some came to south Utah County and immediately diverted water from the Spanish Fork River. By 1900, they recognized that agriculture was growing and additional water was needed to bring more land into agriculture production. In August 1902, local officials filed the necessary paperwork to petition the U.S. Government to fund and construct a reservoir and power plant. This is the Strawberry Reservoir that was built to originally hold 275,000 acre feet of water. One acre foot of water is essentially a football field with 1 foot of water on it. Currently, Strawberry Reservoir holds over 1 million acre feet.

- The Strawberry Valley Project was established in December 1905 at a cost of \$3.5 million, which was large in scope, included the original dam that is now submerged, and included the tunnel through the mountain down to this valley. Funding was through a federal loan to landowners in this valley with the understanding that landowners would pay back the government, which they did in December 1974.
- Strawberry Water Users Association (SWUA) was established in April 1922 with about 3,500 landowners in this valley to manage these facilities. Review of past pictures of the Strawberry Valley Project explaining modern day facilities in the area of the picture.
- The Strawberry Valley Project was formally completed June 1922 and irrigation water was brought to the valley.
- In 1926, SWUA contracted with Federal Bureau of Reclamation to deliver water to nine canal companies, operate and maintain the system, and repay the \$3.5 million debt.
- Currently, the area faces significant population growth. The key to this imported water are those federal contracts entered into by the landowners. This water is appurtenant to the specific land and can only be used for agriculture purposes.
- In the early days of the project, Payson, Salem, and Spanish Fork established shares to assist with city irrigation. Studies have been conducted as to where to obtain water for growth, which resulted that there is enough water in this valley to meet the demand but that strawberry water needs to be converted. This means breaking existing federal contracts.
- In 1920, congress passed the Miscellaneous Purposes Act seeing that in the future this water right would need to be converted under certain criteria. The Mt. Nebo Water Agency has been working for about four years to convert this Strawberry Valley Project water from strict agricultural to municipal and industrial uses.

c. Highline Canal Enclosure (12:53 p.m.)

Marty Larsen stated the Strawberry Highline Canal Company (SHCC) was established in 1889 and has been delivering water since 1916.

- SHCC Mission Statement: The mission of the Strawberry Highline Canal Company is to efficiently and sustainably manage the delivery of water from the Strawberry Reservoir to the agricultural lands and communities it serves, ensuring the continued prosperity of the region's farming and ranching industries while maintaining the health of the surrounding ecosystem.
- Bureau of Reclamation Provo Area Office Mission Statement: The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation Provo Area Office is to efficiently manage, develop, and protect water resources in the region, ensuring reliable water delivery for agricultural, municipal, and industrial uses. The office also works to maintain the health of natural ecosystems and collaborate with local stakeholders to promote sustainable water management practices, fostering economic growth and environmental stewardship.
- SWUA Mission Statement: To develop, preserve, and enhance Strawberry Valley Project water, energy resources, and investments for the benefit of our shareholders.
- CUWCD Mission Statement: The mission of the Central Utah Water Conservancy District is to provide a reliable, sustainable water supply to meet the growing needs of central Utah's communities and industries, while conserving, managing, and protecting water resources for future generations. The district strives to enhance water use efficiency, promote environmental stewardship, and support the development of infrastructure that benefits the region's economic and social well-being.
- Central Utah Project Completion Act Office Mission Statement: The mission of the CUPCA Office is to efficiently manage and oversee the completion of the Central Utah Project, ensuring the delivery of water to communities and agricultural users in central and southern Utah while balancing the needs of the environment, Native American tribes, and other stakeholders. The office works to fulfill the goals of the CUPCA, promoting sustainable water use and enhancing the region's economic, social, and environmental well-being.

In essence, all of these organization are dedicated to ensuring a reliable sustainable water supply, supporting local communities and economies, and balancing human needs with environmental protection. Common threads include water management and delivery, sustainability, support for agricultural and economic growth, collaboration and stakeholder engagement, and environmental stewardship. Review of past pictures compared to present pictures of the Strawberry Highline Canal. Maintenance and upgrades are important to avoid failure or breach of the canal. Liability increases with growth and development. Flash flood events and erosion fills the canal with sediment, which needed to be cleaned once seven years. A couple of years ago, the canal was shut down seven time in one year to clean. Review of the SHCC location and the proposal to pipe from Spring Lake to Genola by 2032.

b. Nebo Water Project (1:05 p.m.)

Roger Pearson reviewed the CUWCD boundaries including Salt Lake County, Utah County, Juab County, Wasatch County, Duchesne County, Uintah County, and a portion of Summit County. CUWCD was organized in 1964 as an operating entity of the Central Utah Project with the objective to collect water along drainages to bring through tunnels and pipelines to the Strawberry Reservoir. The Central Utah Project enlarged the Strawberry Reservoir and constructed a new tunnel though mountain. In 1992, CUPCA constructed tunnels and pipelines down Diamond Fork Canyon and Spanish Fork Canyon to the Wasatch Front. Then the Utah Lake System was established bringing that water to south Santaquin and north to the Provo River. The M&I System constructed the Jordanelle Reservoir to the north. The Federal Government decided it was not interested in water treatment so

CUWCD built four water treatment plants. An additional project was the Central Water Project that purchased the Geneva Steel water rights. Mitigation of environmental impacts was required with the Strawberry Water Project so water was moved from the tunnel to new pipelines.

The Strawberry Valley Project water is strictly for agriculture and the Utah Lake System project water is for outdoor use. Population projections for south Utah County include 211,999 by 2030 and 521,714 by 2065. Utah County and Salt Lake County are projected to have the same populations by 2065. CUWCD's plan is to bring drinking water to communities including a new water treatment facility in Salem. CUWCD is also working with the SHCC on its enclosure project. These two projects really work together and need to be brought together. The Nebo Water Project plan is to pipe the Strawberry Highline Canal and keep this water out of the river and keep the water at pressure. The CUWCD 60-inch pipeline construction will be completed this year. The change is to provide a new connection off the Spanish Fork Canyon pipe around the canal and converging at a water treatment plant. It then is delivered back through a finished water pipe for drinking water all the way into Juab County. Other water goes to a 72-inch pipe for residential outdoor and agricultural use. Note that the Strawberry Reservoir is a multi-year storage facility and has only been filled three times since Soldier Creek Dam was built 50 years ago. South Utah County is the second largest agricultural producer in the state. The cost of the Nebo Water Project is estimated at \$1.6 billion.

Discussion regarding the number of homes on septic tanks in southern Utah County and how to recapture wastewater for reuse. Subdivisions are being built strictly on septic tanks.

e. Groundwater Management Plan (1:32 p.m.)

Steve Jones stated that currently the only source of drinking water is groundwater for southern Utah County until a treatment plant is built. In the past, it has been every man for himself, which has dried up the groundwater. The Mt. Nebo Water Agency (MNWA) is working on this issue by managing groundwater as a reservoir to meet drought and until the water treatment plant is built. There is plenty of water for agriculture and communities but the need is for drinking water. MNWA's proposed 2025 plan is to understand groundwater and work together to optimize groundwater. Even with a water treatment plant, the groundwater system is needed to help communities be resilient especially through drought. Some groundwater levels of operation are toward empty. Review of estimates when communities will run out of drinking water if nothing is done. The short and long term benefits include resilient and optimized sources, cost savings, and community partnerships. Communities need to work together to ensure there is enough water for agriculture, M&I, and the environment.

f. Questions and Answers

- Suggestion to hold this meeting annually with state and county representatives because water is important.
- It's important to tell this story in order to combat misinformation.
- State representatives are hearing from this group but this group needs to push back. Northern communities are being asked to put water toward the Great Salt Lake and wondering why this area isn't contributing. They need to know why this area isn't going to do it and why. The Great Salt Lake is not part of this service area. Better education is needed. Noted that when pressed that this area isn't doing enough, the answer is that this area is the only area importing water and all the return flows go to the benefit of the Great Salt Lake.
- Talking points are needed for all to give out.

- Lobbyists can be helpful in the battle. Discussion for a possible lobbyist for MNWA because the right one is needed.

5. Adjourn

MOTION: Richard Nielson – To adjourn. Motion seconded by Bart Leeftang. Those voting yes: Bart Leeftang, Neil Brown, Braden Sheppard, Dave Tuckett, Paul Taylor, Art Adcock, Kevin Oyler, Boyd Warren, Sterling Brown, Richard Nielson. The motion carried.

This meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.