

the Watershed Watch

Newsletter of Salt Lake County's Watershed Planning & Restoration Program

Spring 2022, Issue 25

Inside

Create a riparian wildscape
page 2

We're growing native woodies for our
stream restoration projects
page 3

2022 Legislative Roundup
Page 4

Happenings

Experience the many great trails in Salt
Lake County. [Trail details and maps.](#)
Salt Lake County Parks & Recreation

[Seven Creeks Walk Series.](#)
Seven Canyons Trust

[2022 Salt Lake County Watershed
Symposium.](#) Save the date!
Salt Lake County Watershed Program
November 16-17, 2022

[Take the pledge to be
pesticide-free](#) in your landscape!
Salt Lake City Sustainability

Be a good stream steward. Keep yard waste out of the stream and off the banks.

by Watershed Planning & Restoration

Stream levels can rise dramatically during storm events and spring runoff, and any debris on the streambanks will get picked up and carried downstream. One of our biggest concern this time of year is the risk of improperly stored yard debris either causing or exacerbating flooding. Grass clippings, tree branches, construction materials, and other debris can block culvert openings or get hung up on bridges. This can cause flooding and property damage for you, your downstream neighbors, or both!

Trash racks and grates help prevent the damage caused by debris in urban streams. Salt Lake County's Flood

Control crews check and clean the grates before, during, and after storms. Over the years they have found that approximately 70% of all the debris removed from the grates is "man-made". This includes things like pruned tree branches and cut tree trunks. When yard cleanup ramps up in the spring, this number can get as high as 90%! In addition to debris removal during storms, Flood Control walks every stream in the county designated as a "flood control facility" (which is just about all of them) to survey and remove problem trees, branches, and trash.

Anything stored for long periods on streambanks also runs the risk of smothering and killing riparian

(continued on page 2)



Trash racks are necessary to catch stream debris before it can cause serious damage during high flows, such as clogging culverts or snagging on bridge crossings. Help keep yard waste out of the stream in the first place!

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YARD DEBRIS

continued from cover

vegetation, whether it is trash or green waste such as grass clippings, pruned branches, and leaf piles. Healthy vegetation in the riparian zone—the ribbon of land the borders streams and lakes—is a valuable resource to all streamside residents. Loss of riparian plants can accelerate bank erosion when their deep roots are no longer helping to stabilize the streambank soils. Excess erosion, in turn, leads to property damage and potential property loss. It also impacts aquatic habitat. When excess sediment flushes downstream, it reduces the sunlight available to aquatic plants and smothers fish eggs. Too much organic matter in the streams (grass, leaves, etc.) will deplete dissolved oxygen in water because organic matter uses oxygen as it decomposes. Each of these scenarios can have serious impacts on fish and other aquatic life.

With the continued trend of higher-than-average temps and lower-than-average precipitation here in northern Utah, spring runoff has already peaked in most of our smaller, lower elevation streams in Salt Lake County. And while the predicted spring runoff volumes for the bigger, higher elevation creeks are currently expected to be lower than average, things can always change! A late spring dump combined with warm temperatures, especially warm nighttime lows, could lead to a rapid snowmelt and high runoff. It's happened before, it can happen again.

Bottom line, be a good stream steward and properly dispose of your yard debris. Don't dump it in the creek. Don't store it on the streambank. This will go a long way toward protecting stream health and preventing flooding and property damage.

Yard Waste Disposal Resources:

Salt Lake County residents can bring green waste (branches, leaves, grass clippings) to be composted at the Salt Lake Valley Landfill, <https://slco.org/landfill/>.

Salt Lake City has a curbside compost pickup program, www.slccgreen.com/compost-can.

□



Photo ©Blood Sweat and Peas

Keep big grass clipping piles off streambanks and out of the stream. They can smother and kill the plants in the riparian zone that are stabilizing the banks and preventing erosion and flood damage!

Create a riparian wildscape

For all streamside residents, maintaining a robust buffer of native riparian plants is one of the best things you can do to care for the health of the stream. Diversity is key, in plant species and structure (different layers of vegetation including trees, shrubs, and ground covers).

Areas closest to the water's edge will experience periodic flooding and more of the stresses associated with higher flows. The native riparian shrubs that grow nearest to the water, along with sedges and rushes (grass-like plants) provide stable banks and healthy riparian habitat. Transitioning from the flood-prone areas into the upland areas provides many opportunities for more diverse plantings.

Plan your riparian area as a "wildscape" to provide habitat for wildlife, both large and small. Multiple layers of vegetation mean more choices of food and shelter for mammals, birds, and pollinators. Bonus, native plants also help reduce maintenance costs. Sit back and enjoy your beneficial landscape!



Photo ©Linda's Lens

We're growing native woodies for our stream restoration projects.

by Watershed Planning & Restoration

We can't say enough how important it is to use native riparian trees and shrubs in stream restoration and revegetation projects. These species are perfectly adapted to thrive in our local environment, quickly taking root and providing quality food and shelter for wildlife. In particular, there are three native woodies that provide the reveg cornerstone for all Watershed Program restoration projects: Peachleaf willow (*Salix amygdaloides*), Coyote willow (*Salix exigua*), and Red-osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*). Not only are these species perfectly suited to the task of stabilizing eroding streambanks and improving riparian habitat, they're also easy to grow in pots. So in 2020, we partnered with Hogle Zoo to create a small nursery and begin cultivating these plants for our own projects!

The process of harvesting riparian woodies in the wild includes taking stem cuttings while the plants are

dormant in winter/early spring, before they leaf out for the season. The harvested stems are cut into 2-4 foot long segments and then planted with roughly 75% of the stem below ground and 25% above. Stem nodes below ground will sprout roots, and nodes above ground will sprout leaves! Called "live stakes," these dormant stem cuttings are an incredibly effective way to revegetate riparian areas. Live stakes are hammered directly into the ground, which means that the timing of harvest, prep, and install before dormancy breaks is critical.

By "planting" the live stakes into pots instead, we're getting a nice cushion on the timing of installation onsite. It is also great to have a steady source of dogwoods and willows for project plantings.

As we use more homegrown woodies at more project sites over time, we'll monitor their success as compared with traditionally live stakes and other purchased container plants. Keep an eye out for the results of these observations in future issues of Watershed Watch! □



Harvested and potted up in March while still dormant, these willow cuttings were busting out leaves in early May! This year's crop, along with cuttings potted up last year, are on their way to several restoration projects on the Jordan River.



2022 Legislative Roundup

Passed Pending Tabled/Postponed Failed

The 2022 Utah State Legislative Session was a busy one. Many bills of interest could significantly affect water quality and watershed function in Salt Lake County. In fact, there were more water-related bills presented during this sessions than we have ever seen, by a large margin! Here's a selection of what passed and what didn't:

H.C.R. 1 Concurrent Resolution to Work Together to Address the Climate, Public Lands, and Carbon Sequestration *Encourages improved land management practices, including coordination with all relevant parties, to reverse trends of carbon emissions with new and evolving technology, expand natural carbon sequestration, and improve health, safety, and forest and ecosystem vitality.*

S.B. 89 Water Amendments *Substantive changes include a requirement that the Division of Water Resources adopt, by rule, regional water conservation goals that are developed by the Division and reevaluated every ten years.*

H.B. 33 Instream Flow Amendments *Amends Utah's instream flow statute (Utah Code § 73-3-30) to allow water rights to be used to benefit Great Salt Lake levels and other sovereign lands if the use contributes to (1) the propagation or maintenance of wildlife; (2) the management of state parks; or (3) the reasonable preservation or enhancement of the natural aquatic environment.*

H.B. 95 Landscaping Requirement Prohibition *Prohibits certain government or private entities from requiring a property owner or resident to plant or maintain lawn or turf.*

H.B. 118 Wetland Amendments *Requires the collection and publication of wetland data and a study of the viability of a fee program for mitigation.*

H.B. 121 Water Conservation Modifications *Prohibits certain lawn or turf requirements; requires water conservation at state government facilities and by state agencies; provides*

for incentives to replace lawn or turf with drought resistant landscaping; requires a commission to do water studies.

H.B. 145 Wildfire Amendments *Requires the Div. of Forest, Fire and State Lands to study the implementation of a wildfire prevention and preparedness plan by Nov 2022.*

H.B. 232 Utah Lake Authority *Creates a Utah Lake Authority to manage and approve any management plan or proposed improvement to Utah Lake.*

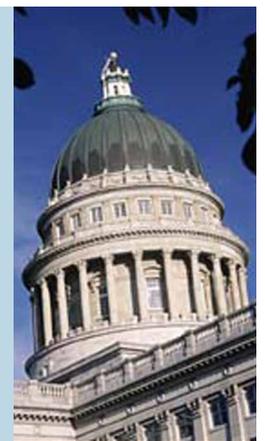
H.B. 240 Utah Lake Amendments *Provides more transparency to the application process for potential Utah Lake restoration projects.*

H.B. 282 Water Wise Landscaping Amendments *Prohibits certain public or private entities from prohibiting water wise landscaping and authorizes certain landscaping requirements.*

H.B. 410 Great Salt Lake Watershed Enhancement *Addresses the duties of the Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands related to the Great Salt Lake and provides for the creation, powers, and duties of the water trust.*

H.B. 429 Great Salt Lake Amendments *Enacts provisions requiring the Division of Water Resources to develop the Great Salt Lake Watershed Integrated Water Assessment.*

Visit the [Utah Water Law and Water Rights Blog](#) for a more in-depth review of all water-related bills from this year's session.



Visit the Utah Legislature website for more information on these and other bills.

<http://le.utah.gov>



Save the Date!

Join us for the 16th Annual Salt Lake County Watershed Symposium
November 16-17, 2022

Free and open to all, the Watershed Symposium is one of the best local opportunities to network and build relationships toward supporting a healthier watershed. Unique learning opportunities and thought-provoking presentations address the current state of our watershed and water quality issues affecting us all.

<https://slco.org/watershed/watershed-symposium/>