

1 **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION CONCERNING BEAR LAKE**

2 2019 GENERAL SESSION

3 STATE OF UTAH

4 **Chief Sponsor: Logan Wilde**

5 Senate Sponsor: Lyle W. Hillyard

7 **LONG TITLE**

8 **General Description:**

9 This concurrent resolution of the Legislature and Governor encourages action regarding
10 Bear Lake.

11 **Highlighted Provisions:**

12 This resolution:

- 13 ▶ recognizes the characteristics, benefits, and challenges of Bear Lake;
- 14 ▶ urges solutions to address challenges to Bear Lake;
- 15 ▶ urges continued cooperation with the state of Idaho to develop joint expectations for
16 the continued health, beauty, and enjoyment of Bear Lake; and
- 17 ▶ encourages the development of opportunities for participation of a wide-range of
18 stakeholders to develop recommendations.

19 **Special Clauses:**

20 None

22 *Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:*

23 WHEREAS, the state of Utah is committed to protecting and enhancing Bear Lake
24 storage water supplies, maintaining its pristine water quality, and enhancing recreational and
25 economic opportunities for Utah's citizens and tourists who add to our economy;

26 WHEREAS, Bear Lake is a large freshwater lake straddling the border of Utah and
27 Idaho with approximately half of the lake in each state, and it is the second largest natural
28 freshwater lake by area in the state of Utah;

29 WHEREAS, Bear Lake has a surface area of approximately 110 square miles;

30 WHEREAS, Bear Lake is the oldest known continually "wet" lake in North America,
31 and one of the five oldest lakes in the world, being at least 250,000 years old;

32 WHEREAS, international scientists study Bear Lake for clues to the climate and
33 ecology of the region;

34 WHEREAS, Bear Lake has unique water chemistry giving it the intense turquoise blue
35 color for which it is known all over the world;

36 WHEREAS, Bear Lake has an extensive shoreline with areas of cobbled and sandy
37 beaches that offer prime recreational opportunities;

38 WHEREAS, in addition to having more endemic fish species (four found only in Bear
39 Lake) than any other lake in the United States, Bear Lake is home to the largest and most
40 genetically pure population of Bonneville cutthroat trout in existence, and the Bonneville
41 cutthroat trout is Utah's state fish;

42 WHEREAS, since about 1912, the upper 21.65 feet of Bear Lake (approximately
43 1,400,000 acre feet of water) has been used as a storage reservoir replenished from natural
44 inflow sources and from diversions from the Bear River in Idaho made by PacifiCorp;

45 WHEREAS, the storage reservoir in Bear Lake has been operated by PacifiCorp to
46 supply irrigation water to approximately 150,000 acres of prime irrigated agriculture on family
47 farms and ranches downstream in Utah and Idaho for over 100 years and will remain an
48 essential irrigation water supply into the future;

49 WHEREAS, the historic Bear Lake irrigation water supply is protected by many
50 agreements among PacifiCorp, the states of Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming, the Bear River Water
51 Users Association and its members, and Bear Lake Watch, each with individual and unique
52 interests in Bear Lake;

53 WHEREAS, in addition to the irrigation water supply, esthetic and recreation uses,
54 PacifiCorp also operates Bear Lake for flood control, and water released and pumped from
55 Bear Lake is used to generate 107 megawatts of electricity downstream on the Bear River;

56 WHEREAS, at times when water is low or is released or pumped from Bear Lake, the
57 exposed lakebed is vulnerable to nonnative vegetation invasion and degradation which create

58 hazards to navigation and impair recreational use for tens of thousands of visitors and
59 thousands of homeowners;

60 WHEREAS, Bear Lake is a major recreation destination, with seven Utah State Park
61 recreation areas and two Idaho State Park recreation areas, the Bear Lake National Wildlife
62 Refuge, private marinas, and Boy Scout camps;

63 WHEREAS, Bear Lake is vital to local and regional economies in Utah and Idaho; and

64 WHEREAS, the state of Utah is committed to work in collaboration with the state of
65 Idaho, PacifiCorp, irrigators, and local stakeholders to protect existing uses and plan for the
66 future uses and enjoyment of Bear Lake:

67 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the
68 Governor concurring therein, urges solutions to address challenges to Bear Lake, including
69 recreation and economic development interests, water quality, invasive species, lakebed
70 management and preservation, and enhancement of irrigation water storage and water supply
71 functions.

72 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor urge continued
73 cooperation with the state of Idaho to develop joint expectations for the continued health,
74 beauty, and enjoyment of Bear Lake.

75 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature and the Governor encourage the
76 development of opportunities for participation with stakeholders to develop recommendations
77 to protect and enhance existing beneficial uses, maintain a healthy and sustainable lake,
78 encourage economic development, protect irrigation water storage, enhance recreation, and
79 preserve and protect Bear Lake for future generations.