

**CONCURRENT RESOLUTION REGARDING THE GREAT
SALT LAKE ELEVATION TARGETS**

2023 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Nate Blouin

House Sponsor: _____

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This resolution addresses the Great Salt Lake.

Highlighted Provisions:

This resolution:

- ▶ describes the current status of the Great Salt Lake;
- ▶ addresses the impacts of the Great Salt Lake on the state's economy;
- ▶ discusses the impacts of low lake levels; and
- ▶ recommends the adoption of a goal to devise and implement policies, incentives,

and funding sources to return the Great Salt Lake to optimal levels.

Special Clauses:

None

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

WHEREAS, the Great Salt Lake has shrunk by 350,000 acres, resulting in historically low lake levels and creating a range of impacts on industry, wildlife species, and human health;

WHEREAS, the Great Salt Lake supports a \$1,400,000,000 input to the state economy, employing many Utahns across an array of sectors, including industry, recreation, and tourism;

WHEREAS, declining water levels of the Great Salt Lake threaten the numerous mineral extraction companies and their 5,000 plus employees that collectively provide over



28 \$800,000,000 in economic benefits to the state;

29 WHEREAS, the Great Salt Lake brings significant lake-effect snowfall to the Wasatch
30 Front's ski areas, generating over \$1,322,000,000 in out-of-state spending, 21,000 local jobs,
31 and \$226,400,000 in local tax revenue every year;

32 WHEREAS, declining water levels of the Great Salt Lake are causing salinity levels to
33 rise, threatening the lake's algae and phytoplankton populations, which provide a food source
34 for brine shrimp and support the state's \$67,000,000 brine shrimp industry;

35 WHEREAS, numerous recreational activities, including waterfowling, sailing, rowing,
36 birdwatching, hiking, and swimming, have already been significantly impacted or altogether
37 eliminated from the Great Salt Lake due to low water levels;

38 WHEREAS, low water levels in the Great Salt Lake have exposed over 350,000 acres
39 of lakebed, which contain heavy metals such as arsenic, copper, antimony, and zirconium, and
40 which could have significant air quality and public health issues along the Wasatch Front;

41 WHEREAS, exposure of the lakebed leads to an increase in dust accumulation on the
42 snowpack, causing the snow to melt faster, and impacting our water supply;

43 WHEREAS, the Great Salt Lake provides important nesting and feeding habitat for
44 over 10,000,000 migratory birds, representing over 330 species, some of which gather at the
45 Great Salt Lake during their migrations in larger numbers than anywhere else in the world;

46 WHEREAS, the Great Salt Lake is home to one of the largest populations of
47 microbialites in the world, which serve as the foundation for the Great Salt Lake's complex
48 ecosystem, and are threatened by the current, low water levels of the Great Salt Lake;

49 WHEREAS, an array of published scientific studies indicate that the bottom level of the
50 optimal range for the water levels of the Great Salt Lake is 4,198 feet in elevation;

51 WHEREAS, the Great Salt Lake needs between four and six million acre-feet of
52 additional water at the time of this resolution to return the Great Salt Lake to this optimal water
53 level;

54 WHEREAS, Utah does not wish to follow the path of numerous other communities
55 across the globe whose saline lakes have disappeared and brought environmental, social,
56 ecological, economic, and public health harm to those communities; and

57 WHEREAS, the Great Salt Lake, the namesake of our state's capital city and home to
58 three separate state parks, plays an important societal and cultural role in the state, the loss of

59 which would significantly degrade Utah's rich cultural heritage:

60 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the
61 Governor concurring therein, recommends that the official goal for the state is to devise and
62 implement an array of policies, incentives, and funding sources to return the Great Salt Lake to
63 optimal levels by raising the lake's surface elevation to at least 4,198 feet.