

Posted Wednesday, August 14, 2002

[Hunting](#)  
[Fishing](#)  
[Licenses](#)  
[News, events](#)  
[Proclamations](#)  
[Outreach](#)  
[Enforcement](#)  
[Habitat](#)  
[Species](#)  
[Publications](#)  
[Board / RACs](#)  
[About DWR](#)

## Utah Division of Wildlife Resources drought response plan for wildlife

*Approved by the Utah Wildlife Board on August 13, 2002*

### Introduction

The State of Utah is experiencing an extended drought with only occasional wetter years. Conditions for fish and wildlife have gradually deteriorated over this period throughout much of the state. Already this year range conditions have deteriorated to critical, nearly unprecedented levels. Stream flows and reservoir levels are in fair shape depending on where they occur, and angling appears good in many locations despite drought circumstances. Continuing drought conditions will no doubt worsen in some areas, although outdoor recreation including angling is expected to remain popular and enjoyable in many parts of the state. Southern Utah is experiencing particularly severe conditions, although almost every part of the state is affected to some degree. Conditions are tough, and there will be impacts although hunting and fishing should still provide good enjoyment throughout the year.

The purpose of this response plan is to inform Division personnel and others concerning the drought, its impacts on wildlife, actions needed to cope with drought conditions, key Division policies for dealing with critical issues, and appropriate means for disseminating information. This is necessary to ensure consistency and accuracy in informing the public of drought impacts on wildlife and related recreational opportunities which may interest them.

Our foremost concern is for the welfare of wildlife. We are also concerned about drought impacts on revenue to the Division and our ability to carry out Division programs that benefit wildlife. We want to emphasize the quality of time spent recreating outdoors, regardless of whether a drought is on-going. We should encourage participation in hunting and angling among those who enjoy participating in these sports.

### Summary of drought impacts on wildlife

#### Fisheries

A prolonged drought may cause severe losses of fish in many streams, lakes, and reservoirs. Much of this loss is not preventable, and angling quality may be temporarily reduced. At present, the impacts have not grown to severe levels in most locations and angling opportunities remain very good. Low stream flows and lake levels typically result in increased water temperature and consequent decreased dissolved oxygen content. Increased biochemical oxygen demand, due to greater organic debris relative to the volume of water present, may further deplete oxygen levels and cause additional fish losses due to suffocation.

Low stream flows in populated or industrialized areas can concentrate pollutants beyond fish tolerance levels and cause further mortality.



Low stream flows and resulting water shortages for crop irrigation usually results in increased efforts to chemically control aquatic vegetation in canals and ditches. Improper use of herbicides can result in extensive fish kills.

Low water levels in lakes resulting from extended drought can jeopardize fish populations in many reservoirs, and especially in small high mountain lakes, by a threat of winter kill.

As water levels diminish in lakes, reservoirs and streams, fish carrying capacity also declines. If levels are significantly reduced, excess fish either move, are caught by anglers, or simply die. Obviously, given those choices, an increased harvest is most desirable, since there is usually little opportunity for movement to better water conditions, and fish may be concentrated and easy to harvest. This fact produces good angling opportunities where conditions are right, and anglers can benefit during early months of the summer.

Given the above impacts of drought on our fisheries, the fisheries outlook for the future hinges on the moisture received between now and winter. Angling after all is fun, and the quality of the experience can be emphasized over the catch rate.

### **Wildlife**

Adverse impacts of drought on terrestrial wildlife can most simply be summarized as depletions of cover, food, and water and the effects of these depletions on productivity and populations.

Impacts on individual species vary, but it is safe to assume that extended severe drought will cause significantly reduced reproductive success and declining populations of most species. This is unavoidable except in areas where wildlife water developments may provide some respite from the drought, although vegetation growth is still affected in those areas.

Greatest impacts of the current drought have been observed with those species found primarily in desert and desert mountain areas where forage and drinking water supplies are limiting, even in normal moisture years. Reduced plant growth and vigor has also been significant on seasonal ranges for migratory species such as mule deer and elk.

A lack of sufficient spring and summer rainfall for several years has had an adverse effect on vegetation growth and resulting range condition and trend over much of the state. Forage supplies for many wildlife species are extremely low, except in some of the higher mountains which naturally receive higher precipitation. Competition for forage between livestock and wildlife is much greater than normal, as forage is reduced. This has intensified agricultural depredation in certain areas.

**Big game** — Mule deer, elk, pronghorn, and bison herds appear to reflect the impacts of prolonged drought and deteriorating range conditions: i.e., winter kill, reduced production of young, and decreased fawn/calf survival through summer. Pronghorn production has been particularly hard hit for the past three years on many of the state's wildlife management units. Some units have shown almost no recruitment into the population for three years.

Drought impacts are clearly demonstrated in mule deer productivity data for the past several years. For the first time in several years, estimated statewide deer population numbers in 2002 have decreased from about 10,000 animals this past year after previously steady increases since the winter of 1992-93. Most of the decreases have occurred in the southern and eastern deer management units.

Big game animals, especially antelope and deer in dry areas, are also adversely affected by the

loss of springs, seeps, and other drinking water sources. A secondary, significant effect can be heavy forage use by animals forced to concentrate around remaining water supplies. These habitat impacts can last many years longer than the drought itself. Concentration of big game animals around water sources also can increase the transmission likelihood of certain diseases (e.g., blue-tongue virus in mule deer).

Drought conditions invariably result in increased depredation of private irrigated croplands. Such damage poses serious problems and economic impacts to both the farmers and the Division.

A most serious concern in big game management in Utah, that is magnified in drought years, is big game/livestock competition for forage on critical big game ranges. Winter ranges are of particular concern as such areas are typically used by livestock in spring, prior to moving to higher summer ranges, and again in fall. During drought years, very little growth occurs on plant species important to big game. Much of the available growth is used by livestock prior to winter when big game descend to the winter range.

This causes extensive wildlife losses, particularly of mule deer, during winters following drought years. This phenomenon has caused significant mortality in deer populations across the state and can be especially devastating if followed by severe winter conditions as occurred in the winter of 1992-93. With continued drought situations, livestock permittees often see their numbers cut substantially which lessens support for maintaining big game numbers on these same ranges.

**Upland game** — Upland game populations typically fluctuate widely over time. Such **fluctuations are primarily** a reflection of annual reproductive success. Reproductive success, on a short-term basis, is principally a function of weather conditions, with the most critical time period being late winter and early spring. Weather affects production either through a direct impact on reproductive success or indirectly through forage production. Extreme weather conditions (temperature and precipitation) generally have a detrimental effect on reproduction; however, not all species are influenced in the same way.

Game birds of relatively dry habitats, such as the chukar, greater sage grouse, and Gambel's quail, are very dependent on the production of annual forbs and grasses. They therefore usually respond well to cool, wet spring weather that produces abundant forage. Forest species — including the ruffed grouse, blue grouse, and wild turkey — tend to respond to mild spring weather with less rainfall. Those associated with irrigated areas, such as the ring-necked pheasant, California quail, and Hungarian partridge are most affected by breeding season temperature rather than precipitation. Cold April weather is usually detrimental to these species.

Extreme drought conditions which significantly reduce vegetation growth, forage production, and available drinking water will undoubtedly adversely impact all upland game species.

**Waterfowl** — Drought invariably results in a drying up of many natural wetlands and reduced water levels and decreasing water quality in managed marshes. Extensive drought in waterfowl production areas always results in population declines due to the loss and degradation of nesting and brood-rearing habitat.

Extensively developed wetlands can temper impacts on local waterfowl numbers to the extent that water levels and marsh conditions can be maintained.

Waterfowl habitat not associated with the Great Salt Lake, has been and will continue to be adversely affected by drought in three basic ways: (1) reduced inflows, (2) increased evaporation, and (3) reduced water quality. Impacts will be less in spring-fed marshes than in

those dependent upon surface flows.

Because most waterfowl management areas are at the "end-of-the-ditch" we can expect not only reduced flows, but also substantially poorer water quality. The extent to which this will impact waterfowl production and use of the areas will depend on the extent of the drought in any given area.

Another major waterfowl threat that is often linked with poor water quality and reduced flows is avian botulism. This disease can kill literally hundreds of thousands of waterfowl and shorebirds in a few week period and is extremely difficult to control. This disease tends to recur in the same general area when conditions are suitable. Historic hot spots include most wetlands along the eastern shore of the Great Salt Lake and Provo Bay on the Utah Lake system.

**Sensitive species** — Animals categorized as sensitive species include fish, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and birds which are typically not harvested. There is great variation among species insofar as habitat requirements are concerned, and consequent diverse responses to drought. Even so, it is safe to conclude that prolonged drought will not benefit any species, even those well adapted to dry conditions. Impacts on food supplies should affect them if nothing else. Smaller mammals and larger predators which depend on smaller mammals, especially those associated with desert/upland areas, will be adversely impacted.

There is particular concern for those species known to be endangered, threatened, or of known sensitive status. Severe drought reflected in greatly reduced stream flows or forage production could set back recovery efforts. Low flows may diminish spawning success of endangered fishes in the Colorado River system.

Natural biotic communities have evolved with an ability to cope with drought. While population levels may fluctuate widely, they can be expected to recover.

The drying of wetlands, riparian, grassland, and rangeland habitat reduces nesting areas and decreases insect food bases, which diminish avian productivity. Wetland and riparian habitats are particularly rich in avian diversity and are affected the greatest by drought conditions.

In addition to drought effects described above under *Fisheries*, reproduction and recruitment of sensitive species fishes is adversely affected by low stream flows and reduced water quality associated with their spawning and rearing periods. Low flows have seriously impacted spawning of the endangered June sucker during past dry years.

## **Drought mitigation alternatives**

### **Fisheries**

The current drought has already adversely affected stream flows, reservoir storage, water temperature, and water quality in many areas. As it continues we can expect further declines and possible fish losses. Nothing can be done to restore lost stream flows. Despite the effects of drought, fishing remains good in many areas.

The Aquatics Section has already adjusted hatchery production and fish distribution schedules to compensate for drought conditions. Regional fisheries managers have been given full authority to modify stocking quotas and schedules within constraints imposed by drought conditions.

Despite the drought, there are many opportunities for good fishing. It is extremely important that we apprise the public of these opportunities now, and throughout the summer and fall. This

will require a joint effort by Aquatics, Conservation Outreach, and Law Enforcement to monitor water conditions and fishing success and inform the public accordingly.

We must closely monitor conservation pool levels and prescribed minimum stream flows to assure compliance with contract or permit conditions and to ensure the Division's water rights are protected.

Hatchery personnel and regional fisheries managers must evaluate fish stocking needs in light of the current drought in order to program hatchery production schedules.

Division personnel must be prepared to respond to fish kills when assigned. Such losses can be expected as a result of low water levels, excessive diversions, low oxygen levels, and chemical treatments to control aquatic vegetation. Each incident must be investigated by appropriate personnel, making certain to notify appropriate contact people in the Department of Environmental Quality as is typically done in these matters.

We must anticipate losses in perennial problem areas and initiate efforts to avoid losses to the extent possible. Regions must take the lead in this effort. Cooperative efforts with irrigation companies may prevent or minimize losses.

### **Wildlife**

Reduced production and subsequent wildlife population declines have already somewhat lessened grazing pressures on rangelands to some degree. This is expected to continue through this year, and in some ways matches the cuts which livestock producers have been forced to take. The Wildlife Board has established harvest regulations for 2002 that have taken into consideration potential problems with continued drought, and harvest numbers reflect these considerations. It is essential that wildlife managers further monitor range conditions to ensure an appropriate future balance between herd size and carrying capacity. This must be done in concert with the federal land management agencies who control the dominant share of habitat.

Water developments installed for wildlife must be maintained in good working order. Consideration should be given to the feasibility of hauling water in critical situations. Land management agencies should be encouraged to ensure proper maintenance of water developments benefiting wildlife.

It is expected that depredation problems will escalate and every effort — within legal, funding, and work force constraints — must be made to assist farmers and ranchers in minimizing wildlife impacts on crop production. In areas where big game herds are substantially below management objective, killing of animals that move into agricultural lands during drought should be minimized where possible.

The new tools we have to deal with big game depredation on private cultivated land will help alleviate some problems. These tools were not available in 1993, and include the changes in the Utah Code for irrigation equipment and fence damage, antlerless mitigation permits for landowners, the development of a statewide depredation account, and the hiring of many full-time/seasonal personnel by the Division to deal with landowners' needs and their depredation problems in the regions.

Drought usually increases nuisance beaver complaints in canals and ditches. A diligent effort will be required to control these problems at a time when water is in short supply.

Dry, unproductive rangelands may cause unusual dispersal of young bears. Increased

human/bear conflicts can be expected and must be handled promptly and within policy guidelines.

In the final analysis, little can be done to significantly alter the impact of extreme drought on wildlife populations. We must work with the public in an informational mode to provide accurate information on drought and its effects on wildlife. Management efforts should focus on diminishing or avoiding human-caused disturbances that further stress populations whose status is already tenuous.

Waterfowl management area superintendents must closely monitor inflows and adjust water levels in individual units in a way that maximizes habitat quantity and quality. They will also need to closely monitor waterfowl populations for signs of botulism and implement remedial actions required to minimize losses and diminish public concerns.

### **Guidelines for dissemination of information**

#### **Concerning drought impacts on fish and wildlife**

Information should be provided to the media and the public so that it becomes clear the Division is aware of the many drought-related problems, and that steps have been and will continue to be taken to cope to the extent feasible.

The public should understand that the Division has considered drought impacts in the establishment of harvest regulations, and that prescribed harvests are within harvestable surpluses of game species.

News releases should stress that hunting and fishing will not be detrimental to populations, and that a reasonable harvest will minimize natural mortality next winter. This is especially true of big game populations that must be kept within management objectives. An adequate harvest not only will tend to minimize potential winter loss, but at the same time will relieve pressure on short forage supplies and help conserve range conditions for the future.

We must be candid in explaining potentials for mitigating drought impacts on widespread populations of fish and wildlife. Drought conditions are natural, wildlife species are generally adapted to them, but drought is often unpleasant. We must be sensitive to deep-seated public concern for the welfare of wildlife during drought, and take the appropriate actions where we can.

#### **Concerning fishing**

Drought conditions dictate a need to increase our conservation outreach efforts over a "normal" year. We must make an extra effort to inform the public of promising fishing opportunities which in fact can be quite good during drought conditions, at least in certain areas. Aquatics personnel, Habitat and Wildlife staff, and conservation officers must take the initiative to provide our Conservation Outreach staff with needed information and guidance on drought matters. We need to help the public identify the waters which are providing good angling during different times through the year, and Conservation Outreach staff need detailed up-to-the-minute reports they can use in various information releases which should help the public during this drought period.

The following key points should be considered in the preparation of news releases:

- Be positive and upbeat about fishing opportunities.
- Identify current hot spots that can sustain pressure, and the increased fishing

- opportunities in reservoirs and lakes subject to fishing proclamation changes.
- Make timely news releases.
  - Emphasize opportunities on the larger reservoirs and in fisheries below reservoirs.
  - Stress that even with the drought, fishing is one of the greatest outdoor recreational opportunities available, and at the best price.
  - Encourage use of relatively unfished areas that provide good opportunity, such as the high mountain lakes of the Uintas and Starvation Reservoir for walleye.
  - Place greater emphasis on the growing smallmouth bass fisheries in Rockport, Flaming Gorge, and Lake Powell.
  - Identify regional variation in drought conditions and fishing opportunities.
  - Be honest, absolutely honest as at all times, but be prudent. It is not dishonest to state that fishing is always good, but sometimes it is better than at other times. Advise the public in the way you would want to be advised if the roles were reversed.
  - In communicating with the mass media, be sure your information is accurate. If you do not know, tell them that; seek to find the answers the press needs.

### **Concerning hunting**

As with fishing, a concerted Conservation Outreach effort will be needed to inform the public of hunting opportunities. Wildlife Managers must work closely with Conservation Outreach to provide needed information.

It is important that we emphasize that a harvestable surplus exists in hunted populations, even during drought years. It is important that hunting be used in critical situations where wildlife populations can potentially exceed a drought reduced carrying capacity.

The following key points should be considered in the preparation of news releases during the continuing drought conditions:

- If dry conditions persist, a major effort will be needed to warn of fire danger and possible local closures as fire prevention measures.
- Stress the importance of annual harvest of big game in maintaining a proper balance between herd size and available forage. Habitat damage is long term.
- Stress that antlerless permits authorized for big game species are intended to ensure keeping herd size in balance with available forage.
- Emphasize species which should provide good hunting.
- Avoid predictions of hunter success which becomes very hard to predict during times of drought.

### **Drought-related policies**

#### **Protection of fish conservation pools**

Drought-caused declines in stream flows and reservoir water levels inevitably result in local government requests for using water reserved in fish conservation pools for culinary and irrigation use. The Division is obligated to protect conservation ("C") pools purchased for fish using sportsmen's money after all, drought conditions are the only time when conservation pools are needed! Nonetheless, we must also be sensitive to critical human needs.

Regional supervisors will take the lead in negotiating "C" pool protection and possible diversion to satisfy critical human needs, if, when, and where it becomes necessary. It must be understood that the Division is willing to work cooperatively with local government in seeking solutions to their problems, but we will only surrender water in fish conservation pools *as a last*

*resort* in meeting critical needs. The following guidelines apply to such negotiations:

1. Fish conservation pool water will be relinquished only for critical culinary use, not for irrigation or industrial purposes.
2. Conservation pool water will not be provided in lieu of strict water conservation measures being implemented by local government.
3. Any use of conservation pools for culinary purposes will be kept to the minimum required to meet an existing crisis. As much water as possible should be retained in a "C" pool to protect the fishery.
4. The minimum conditions for relinquishing "C" pool water will be that the Division receive first priority replacement from subsequent increased stream flows, at no cost to the Division.

Compensation at fair market value for water provided or for fishery replacement costs may be required in some situations. Such decisions will be made by the Director on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the Regional Supervisor.

5. A written agreement between the Division Director and local officials must be executed before relinquishing any "C" pool water. Such agreement must specify the quantity of water to be used, the timing of use, and compensation required.

Failure to adequately protect conservation pools purchased with Federal Aid funds will jeopardize future Federal Aid appropriations, and as such the Director will secure approval from Federal Aid prior to any such agreement being made.

Following is a list of conservation pools and stabilized lakes owned by the Division. Regional Supervisors and Aquatics Managers must review this list and identify potential areas of conflict. If a local demand for water is anticipated, supervisors should consider initiating contacts with community/water company officials to advise them of actions required before submitting requests for "C" pool water: e.g., implementation of strict water conservation measures. Without having first exhibited strict water conservation measures being put in place and enforced, no water will be relinquished.

Occasionally, a demand for "C" pool water will coincide with Division goals to treat or repair reservoirs. In such instances, Regional supervisors are granted the latitude to negotiate the best interest of the Division, aside from the above guidelines.

### **Conservation pools/stabilized lakes**

The Division of Wildlife Resources has in the past and is presently pursuing opportunities to enhance fishing recreation on Utah's lakes and reservoirs. In an effort to preserve aquatic habitat, "Conservation Pools" and "Stabilized Lakes" are acquired to provide the environment needed to sustain fish populations on a year-round basis.

The term conservation pool refers to a given volume of water that is maintained in a reservoir basin. In most cases, conservation pools are acquired from irrigation companies to provide needed fish habitat. Generally speaking, this amounts to the minimum water level to which the company may release water from the reservoir.

Stabilized lakes on the other hand are reservoirs that are maintained at a given water level to provide recreational fishing. These reservoirs, or lakes, are kept at a constant volume and water



level is fluctuated only when it becomes necessary to protect fish populations or satisfy dam safety requirements.

Conservation pools and stabilized lakes are extremely important in the management of Utah's fisheries program. The following is a list of conservation pools and stabilized lakes that have been acquired by the Division of Wildlife Resources in an effort to preserve aquatic habitat.

### CONSERVATION POOLS

Name of water	Year acquired	Acre feet	County	Region
Yankee Meadows Res.	1940	300	Iron	Southern
Upper Enterprise Res.	1942	200	Washington	Southern
Scotfield Res.	1944	8,000	Carbon	Southeast
Navajo Lake	1958	3,000	Kane	Southern
Red Creek Res.	1959	128	Duchesne	Northeast
Lower Bown Res.	1959	725	Garfield	Southern
East Park Res. (F-13-D)	1960	1,300	Uintah	Northeast
Porcupine Res.	1960	1,500	Cache	Northern
Blanding Res. No. 3	1961	64	San Juan	Southeast
Woodruff Narrows Res. (F-16-D)	1962	4,000	Wyoming	Northern
Tibble Fork Res.	1963	166	Utah	Central
Big Sandwash Res. (F-19-L)	1965	1,200	Duchesne	Northeast
Blanding Res. No.4 (F-4-D-1, *APW)	1965	219	San Juan	Southeast
Minersville Res. (F-20-L), Rocky Ford	1965	2,000	Beaver	Southern
Johnson Valley Res. (F-18-D)	1965	2,500	Sevier	Southern
Pelican Lake (F-21-L)	1966	4,500	Uintah	Southeast
Whitney Res.	1967	500	Summit	Northern
Upper Woodruff Res. (F-23-L)	1968	450	Rich	Northern
(Additional acquired) (F-57-L4)	1989	249		
Birch Creek Res. (F-23-L)	1968	400	Rich	Northern
Mill Site Res. (F-25-L)	1968	2,000	Emery	Southeast
Gunlock Res. (F-27-D)	1970	1,014	Washington	Southern
Silver Lake Flat Res.	1971	100	Utah	Central
Newcastle Res.	1974	500	Iron	Southern
Brough Res. (F-33-L)	1975	1,145	Uintah	Northeast
Kents Lake Res.	1977	300	Beaver	Southern
Paragonah Res. (F-36-D)	1980	350	Iron	Southern
Long Park Res. (F-35-D)	1980	3,000	Daggett	Northeast
Oak Creek Res. (F-37-D)	1982	370	Garfield	Southern
Cottonwood Res.	1983	700	Uintah	Northeast
Woods Pond (F-57-L-6)	1989	6	Iron	Southern
Upper Kents Lake (F-57-L-13)	1992	80	Beaver	Southern
Sand Hollow (F-27-D)**	2002	1,086	Washington	Southern

\*APW (Applied Public Works) \*\*From July 2002 until February 15, 2003, some or all of this conservation pool may be retained in Kolob Reservoir where valuable fisheries exist, and warrant protection

### STABILIZED LAKES

Name of water	Year acquired	Surface acres	County	Region
Burraston Ponds (3)	1901	17.3	Juab	Central
Gooseberry Pond	1938	25.0	Sanpete	Southeast
Duck Creek Springs	1939	7.5	Kane	Southern
Aspen-Mirror Lake	1939	3.0	Kane	Southern
Pine Lake (F-31-D)	1947	80.0	Garfield	Southern
Monticello Lake (F-6-D)	1954	3.5	San Juan	Southeast
Browne Lake (F-10-D)	1958	54.0	Daggett	Northeast
Anderson Meadow Lake (F-11-D)	1958	8.7	Beaver	Southern
Sheep Creek Lake (F-12-D)	1959	80.0	Daggett	Northeast
Barker Res. (F-34-D)	1960	12.0	Garfield	Southern
Lower Barker Res.	1960	5.0	Garfield	Southern
Long Willow Bottom Res. (F-34-D)	1960	5.0	Garfield	Southern
Round Willow Bottom Res. (F-34-D)	1960	9.0	Garfield	Southern
Joe Lay Res. (F-34-D)	1960	4.0	Garfield	Southern
Mill Hollow Lake (F-15-D)	1962	17.1	Wasatch	Central
LeBaron Lake (F-2-D-1, *APW)	1965	23.0	Beaver	Southern
Crouse Res.	1966	115.0	Uintah	Northeast
Foy Lake	1966	4.9	San Juan	Southeast
Ferron Res. (566 **SWP)	1974	65.0	Sanpete	Southeast
Bullock Res.	1977	90.0	Uintah	Northeast
Duck Fork Res. (566 **SWP)	1977	42.0	Sanpete	Southeast
Willow Lake (566 **SWP)	1977	25.0	Sanpete	Southeast
Wrigley Springs Res. (F-25-L)	1980	12.7	Sanpete	Southeast
Calder Res. (F-40-L)	1980	100.0	Uintah	Northeast
Matt Warner Res. (F-40-L)	1980	356.0	Uintah	Northeast
Manning Meadow Res. (F-57-L1)	1988	55.0	Piute	Southern
Barney Lake (F-57-L1)	1988	19.0	Piute	Southern
Deep Lake (F-57-L2)	1988	5.0	Sanpete	Central
Shingle Mill Lake (F-57-L2)	1988	2.0	Sanpete	Central
Daggett Lake	1989	44.0	Daggett	Northeast
Jesson Lake	1989	22.0	Daggett	Northeast
Tamarack Lake	1989	64.0	Daggett	Northeast
Wellsville Res. (F-57-L2)	1989	6.0	Cache	Northern
Pacer Lake (F-57-L8)	1996	33.0	Garfield	Southern
Spirit Lake	2000	42.8	Daggett	Northeast
Little Montes Cr. Res. (Ottosen Res.)	2000	16.3	Uintah	Northeast
Gates Lake	2001	5.0	Sevier	Southern
Lake Canyon Lake	2002	25.5	Duchesne	Northeast

\*APW (Applied Public Works) \*\*SWP (Small Watershed Project)

### Protection of prescribed instream flows and flow rights

Historically, instream flows were not recognized as a beneficial use of water under Utah law. Of course that has changed to permit both the Division of Wildlife Resources and the Division of Parks and Recreation to hold instream flow rights. Several have been established, and they are important. However, even before the instream flow rights, through the years a number of instream flow requirements were established on various waters throughout the state, as

stipulated by operating agreements associated with federally-funded water projects. Other flows were derived from hydroelectric licensing requirements or protection of endangered species. In time of drought, the pressure to reduce or eliminate the required instream flows mounts. In almost all cases, the instream flow required is already at the minimum level needed to protect the existing fishery. We should therefore resist efforts to reduce these flows. In most cases the required flows are mandated by federal regulation and the Division therefore has only partial responsibility for making such decisions.

Regional supervisors will take the lead in negotiating any modification to instream flows to satisfy critical human need. It must be understood that the Division is willing to work cooperatively with local government in seeking solutions to their problems, but we will allow reductions in stream flow only *as a last resort* in meeting critical human needs. The following guidelines apply to such negotiations:

1. Instream flow reductions will be agreed to only for critical culinary use, not for irrigation or industrial purposes.
2. Instream flow reductions will not be agreed to in lieu of strict water conservation measures being implemented by local government.
3. Any reduction of instream flow will be kept to the minimum needed to meet an existing crisis.
4. Compensation for the instream flow reduction shall be subsequent increases in instream flow during other critical periods, pending approval by the Division Director. In-kind, in-place compensation is preferred, but other kinds may be considered. The Director will make such decisions on a case-by-case basis.
5. Any reductions in instream flow shall be time-limited to 30 days maximum duration, and require written agreement specifying amounts and durations. Involved parties shall reconvene after 30 days to reassess conditions. Agreements may be revoked, modified, or extended at that time.

### **Fish salvage**

Drought conditions this year will be severe in most parts of the state which will lead to dewatering of streams and lakes. This may cause stranding and/or concentrations of fish. The Division will no longer attempt to salvage fish from one water and move them to another water. This activity is not cost effective, and risk of moving diseases is just too great. This is particularly true since the discovery of whirling disease in the state.

Regional aquatic managers, conservation officers and other Division personnel should carefully monitor areas where fish are likely to become stranded. These sites need to be publicized and anglers encouraged to take a legal limit. In cases where the fish cannot be utilized by maintaining standard regulations, consideration will be given to liberalizing the bag limit. It will be very important for the field personnel to act quickly if these types of situations develop. We can usually amend the proclamation within a 24-hour period if an emergency situation develops.

---

**For further information contact:** Bill James, Habitat Section Chief, at (801) 538.4752 or Bill Bradwisch, Aquatic Habitat Coordinator, at (801) 538.4866. See the Division's Web site at <http://www.wildlife.utah.gov> and thank you for helping to conserve Utah's wildlife and natural diversity.