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DISTRICT RESPONDS TO MISINFORMATION REGARDING COUNTY'S WATER SUPPLY

In an ongoing effort to ensure the public has accurate information, the Washington County Water Conservancy District is clarifying claims made by the Utah Rivers Council (URC) in a press release distributed on June 5, 2019 regarding Washington County's water supply. Following are Washington County's current reliable water supply estimates, excluding the Lake Powell Pipeline:

- Culinary water: 59,172 acre feet¹
- Secondary water: 8,505 acre feet²
- Future planned culinary water: 13,670 acre feet³
- Future planned secondary water: 17,380 acre feet⁴

Future water supply will come online incrementally as projects are completed or when water becomes available, i.e. when agricultural water is transferred to municipal and industrial use.

Washington County's current and future planned water supply will not meet the anticipated demand of its growing population, which is projected to increase 229 percent by 2065.⁵

In addition, further dependence on a single, variable water source – the Virgin River basin – for one of the nation's fastest growing areas⁶ is irresponsible.

(more)

¹ Lake Powell Pipeline, Water Needs Assessment, MWH, April 2016 (Table 4-3): <https://lpputah.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2016-Water-Needs-Assessment.pdf>

² Lake Powell Pipeline, Water Needs Assessment, MWH, April 2016 (Table 4-3): <https://lpputah.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2016-Water-Needs-Assessment.pdf>

³ Lake Powell Pipeline, Water Needs Assessment, MWH, April 2016 (Table 4-6): <https://lpputah.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2016-Water-Needs-Assessment.pdf>

⁴ Lake Powell Pipeline, Water Needs Assessment, MWH, April 2016 (Table 4-6): <https://lpputah.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2016-Water-Needs-Assessment.pdf>

⁵ Utah's Long-term Demographic and Economic Projections, Kem C Gardner Policy Institute at the University of Utah, 2017: <https://gardner.utah.edu/demographics/population-projections/>

⁶ St. George, Utah, is nation's fastest growing metro area, Census says, USA Today, March 22, 2018: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2018/03/22/st-george-utah-nations-fastest-growing-metro-area-census-says/448197002/>

To augment and diversify Washington County’s water supply, Utah legislation passed a law in 2006 that states the Utah Board of Water Resources will “construct the Lake Powell Pipeline.”⁷

The Lake Powell Pipeline will deliver 82,249 acre feet of water a year to Washington County via an estimated 140-mile pipeline. The project provides the needed water supply to meet forecasted demands and diversifies the county’s water source in a cost effective and environmentally responsible way.

“Those responsible with providing water to Utah’s population and economy know the Lake Powell Pipeline is essential to serve the future needs of our community,” said Ron Thompson, general manager of the Washington County Water Conservancy District. “Misrepresented data prepared by opposition groups doesn’t change that fact.”

To clarify the numbers cited in URC’s press release, the district reported 60,000 acre feet of water in 2018 in reference to the county’s reliable culinary water supply; the 74,600 acre feet reported in 2013 is the county’s reliable culinary and secondary water supply prior to climate change modeling that suggested an approximately 10 percent reduction; the estimated 100,000 acre feet reported in 2011 and in the 2017 Fitch Ratings include current and future reliable culinary and secondary water supply, excluding the Lake Powell Pipeline.

URC also claims that a 2016 fact sheet, [Exploring Utah’s Water](#) by Utah State University, reports that there are more than 200,000-plus acre feet of water supply in Washington County. The district has reviewed this fact sheet and confirmed with the report’s authors that this document does not report the county’s available water supply.

Thompson clarifies that water supply numbers are not stagnant and will change. “Supply estimates are continually being refined as conditions change and new information becomes available. Changes in water quality standards, environmental requirements and/or climate variations will affect water supply numbers,” he said. “The district has always been, and will continue to be, transparent with information regarding our water supply and use.”

About the Washington County Water Conservancy District

The Washington County Water Conservancy District is a not-for-profit public agency established in 1962 to manage Southern Utah’s regional water needs. The district oversees the development, stabilization, management, acquisition and conservation of water resources in Washington County in an ongoing effort to provide a safe, reliable water supply for current and future generations. Visit www.wcwcd.org for more information.

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⁷ Lake Powell Pipeline Development Act, 2006: https://le.utah.gov/xcode/Title73/Chapter28/C73-28_1800010118000101.pdf