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TEN REASONS UTAH NEEDS THE LAKE POWELL PIPELINE

Guest editorial by Ron Thompson, General Manager, Washington County Water Conservancy District

Some have recently suggested the Lake Powell Pipeline (LPP) is an unnecessary water project. My job would be much easier if that were the case.

Building large water infrastructure projects is challenging – it takes a tremendous amount of time and resources, the environmental process is long and complicated, and it's expensive. I know this all too well. But, I'm committed to the effort.

Why?

1. Additional water supplies are necessary to meet the needs of future generations. We're fortunate to live in a state that plans for its future generations – we're all recipients of our forefather's efforts and have the same obligation to those who come after us.
2. We can no longer afford to rely on a single water source of variable quality and quantity. Our local communities are 100 percent dependent on water from the Virgin River Basin, which has experienced drought conditions 12 out of the past 20 years.
3. The LPP provides more water at a lower cost than other alternatives. We've studied everything from reverse osmosis to wastewater use to the elimination of all outdoor watering – nothing can match the yield at the same price point as the LPP.
4. Water is critical to sustaining the economy and supporting jobs.
5. We need additional water supplies and storage to protect against future droughts.
6. A safe, reliable water supply is critical to public health, water quality, fire protection and the environment.
7. The LPP complements our conservation efforts. Washington County has reduced its water use more than 30 percent in the last 15 years – one of the highest reductions in the state – and is working toward additional reductions.
8. The LPP allows us to use five percent of Utah's Colorado River Compact allocation of 1.71 million acre feet. The state is currently using approximately 1 million acre feet, leaving a surplus available for development. Utah's water supply in Lake Powell is one of the most secure in the state.
9. Nearly six million visitors are welcomed in our community annually. The LPP supports tourism, generating significant state revenues and jobs.
10. Legislation to develop the LPP passed with 96 out of 97 votes from state senators and representatives; rights to develop the water have been secured, but need to be acted upon now.

The LPP is one component of Washington County's long-term water supply plan – there isn't a single solution. The multi-pronged plan includes protecting/extending our current supplies, conservation, reuse, local projects, free-market agricultural transfers and the LPP.

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Since the Lake Powell Pipeline Development Act passed, dozens of environmental studies have been performed and submitted to the appropriate federal agencies for review and approval. Once all the required approvals have been secured, we'll work with the state to prepare a project design, financing plan and start construction. We plan to start construction in the early 2020s.

The currently proposed project includes an approximately 140-mile underground pipeline, five pump stations and six hydropower stations. The cost is estimated at \$1.1 - \$1.8 billion dollars.