

Utah Port Announces Great Salt Lake Commitment with New Wetlands Funding, Natural Resources Partnerships

Utah Port marks advances for responsible industrial growth, pairing economic development with Great Salt Lake conservation and water-wise planning.

SALT LAKE CITY, UT, UNITED STATES, July 15, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Utah Inland Port Authority announced Wednesday an additional \$2.5 million investment to support Great Salt Lake shoreline preservation and wetland conservation, bringing UIPA's conservation funding to \$5 million this year and \$7.5 million total.

The announcement marks the next step in UIPA's continued broader effort to support responsible growth by investing directly in natural resource protection, strengthening regional partnerships and establishing new water-wise development practices for future industrial growth.

UIPA will provide the conservation funding while working with the Utah Department of Natural Resources to lead the conservation work, including evaluating opportunities, negotiating potential land or conservation transactions and determining where the funding can have the greatest long-term impact.

"Utah's economy and Utah's natural resources have to be planned for together," said Ben Hart, executive director of the Utah Inland Port Authority. "This investment reflects the kind of responsible growth UIPA is committed to, growth that supports jobs, infrastructure and opportunity while also protecting the Great Salt Lake, conserving water and addressing impacts



This drone photo was captured July 15, 2026, at the Great Salt Lake, where UIPA announced new funding for shoreline preservation and wetland conservation. The specific land to be protected will be finalized in the coming months.

in the communities we serve.”

As part of the announcement, UIPA also launched a new partnership with Utah Water Ways and introduced its drafted Natural Resources Policy. The framework is intended to guide future development with a focus on water-wise practices.

UIPA is also working with partners including Utah Clean Energy and the Dark Sky Utah Chapter to strengthen its approach to responsible development, including natural resource protection, water conservation, energy efficiency and dark sky considerations.



UIPA's Executive Director, Ben Hart, speaks at a press event announcing additional investments to support Great Salt Lake shoreline preservation and wetland conservation.

“This is exactly the type of partnership Utah needs as we plan for the future,” said Tage Flint, executive director of Utah Water Ways. “Water conservation cannot be an afterthought. By building water-wise practices into the front end of economic development, UIPA is helping set a stronger standard for how growth can happen responsibly in our state.”

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Ben Hart, Executive Director of the Utah Inland Port Authority

The investment builds on UIPA's earlier Wetlands Policy, EPA Clean Ports planning work and ongoing commitments tied to the Great Salt Lake, Salt Lake City's west side and the Northwest Quadrant. UIPA leaders said the new funding and policy framework represent a shift from project-by-project mitigation toward a more proactive and consistent approach to responsible development.

“Salt Lake City's relationship with the Great Salt Lake is personal,” said Salt Lake City Mayor Erin Mendenhall. “The lake shapes our air, our water, our wildlife, our economy, and the daily lives of people across this region—especially in our westside communities. Protecting its shorelines and wetlands is one of the most important ways we protect the health, resilience, and future of the people who call this place home.”

The Great Salt Lake and its surrounding wetlands provide critical wildlife habitat, support Utah's economy and play an important role in the state's environmental health. Continued shoreline

and wetland conservation efforts are considered an important part of protecting the lake's long-term future.

"Protecting the Great Salt Lake requires sustained investment and coordination," said Joel Ferry, commissioner of the Utah Department of Natural Resources. "This funding gives us another tool to preserve high-value shoreline and wetland areas while working with partners who understand the importance of both conservation and responsible planning."



Salt Lake City's Mayor Erin Mendenhall speaks during a July 15 press event at the Great Salt Lake.

Salt Lake County also joined the announcement, emphasizing the importance of regional collaboration around the Great Salt Lake, west side communities and long-term natural resource planning.

"Salt Lake County is committed to protecting the Great Salt Lake and the communities connected to it," said Salt Lake County Mayor Jenny Wilson. "This investment shows what can happen when state, local and regional partners work together around shared priorities."

UIPA officials said the framework will help guide future project area planning and business recruitment by encouraging companies and communities to consider water use, natural resource impacts and long-term sustainability early in the development process.

"Industrial growth creates economic opportunity, but it also creates real impacts," Hart said. "Our responsibility is to help communities plan for those impacts, reduce them where possible and invest in solutions that create long-term value for Utah."

UIPA is inviting public feedback on its draft Natural Resources Policy. [The draft policy is available here.](#) [Feedback may be submitted here.](#) Please submit feedback by August 10. Public input will help inform the final policy, which is expected to be presented to the UIPA board for consideration on September 3, and ensure implementation reflects community priorities, conservation goals and responsible growth practices.

"Stewardship of our natural resources and working together to solve tough problems is part of who we are as Utahns," said Utah House Speaker Mike Schultz. "Protecting the Great Salt Lake takes all of us, with local communities, industry partners and state leaders pulling in the same direction. This investment is a great example of what that kind of collaboration can accomplish, and it's how we'll preserve this incredible resource for future generations."

Kaitlin Felsted

Utah Inland Port Authority

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