

# The Great Salt Lake



The Great Salt Lake is the largest saline lake in the Western Hemisphere and the eighth largest in the world – boasting a rich web of relationships between people, land, water, food and survival.

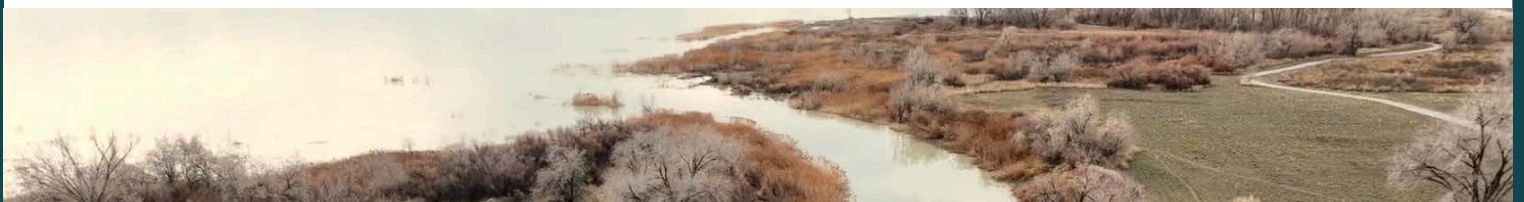
## History

The Great Salt Lake is the remainder of Lake Bonneville, which formed about 32,000 years ago and covered nearly a quarter of Utah at its largest. Lake Bonneville is believed to have reached depths of 1,000 feet while today, the average depth of the Great Salt Lake today is 14 feet.



## A Terminal Lake

Three rivers flow into the lake – the Bear River, Weber River and Jordan River – but no water flows out of it, making it a “terminal” lake. Because it is shallow and salty, it loses about 2 million acre-feet of water through evaporation each year. Evaporation rates are highest during the hot summer months and lowest during the winter.



## Challenges

A drying Great Salt Lake has local and regional consequences and could result in increased dust, poor air quality, reduced snow and lake access, habitat loss and negative economic consequences to the state. Increased depletions and higher temperatures coupled with prolonged drought caused the lake to hit historic lows in November 2022 at 4,188.5 feet above sea level.



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## Wildlife

The lake and its wetlands provide a critical stopover where as many as 12 million birds (339 species) rest and refuel during their annual migration. Free-roaming bison, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, mule deer and many other animals reside on Antelope Island.

## Sovereign Land

The bed of the Great Salt Lake is sovereign land and is managed by the Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands under the public trust doctrine, balancing its various uses.

## Preserve and Protect

Our goal is to ensure Utah's people, environment, economy and agriculture have water to thrive now and into the future. Finding that balance requires solutions, including increased conservation, improved system efficiency, agriculture optimization and strategic water projects. While finding that balance can be challenging, we are working with agencies, organizations and individuals to preserve and protect the Great Salt Lake.

## Recreation

People enjoy a variety of recreational activities on and around the lake, including sailing or floating, wildlife watching, biking and hiking at Antelope Island State Park, or bird watching at one of the many wildlife management areas and sanctuaries in the surrounding area.

## Industry & Economy

The lake is a rich source of magnesium, sulfate of potash, brine shrimp and more and contributes significantly to Utah's economy. It also contributes about 5-10% to Utah's famous snow, which supports a robust ski industry.