Great Salt Lake Water Delivery Program
Voluntary Water Transactions
Request for Proposals
July 2025

Background

Drought, climate change and continued water demand are threatening the Great Salt Lake. As acknowledged by the United States Department of the Interior and specifically the Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), many tools and actions are needed to protect and preserve the lake. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has awarded $50 million of Inflation Reduction Act funds to the Utah Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Office of the Great Salt Lake Commissioner (GSLCO) to implement the Great Salt Lake Water Delivery Program (GSLWDP or Program). Administered by DNR and GSLCO, this Program is one of the key tools to protect the future health of the Great Salt Lake. Collectively, the program will result in delivering conserved water to the lake, depleting less water within the Great Salt Lake basin, and enhancing the surface water flow monitoring network throughout the complex ecosystem. The GSLWDP has three focus areas, or project categories: voluntary water transactions, system conservation, and ecosystem and habitat restoration. This Request for Proposal focuses on the voluntary water transactions in the Great Salt Lake Basin.

The voluntary water transactions funded through the GSLWDP will increase water flows to the Great Salt Lake through incentivizing the choice to not use water when possible. This funding category focuses on cases where water used beneficially outdoors is instead shepherded to the Great Salt Lake. Voluntary water leases result in greater volumes of water reaching the lake, and move us closer towards our goal of conserving, dedicating, and delivering 10% of the water used in the basin to reverse the lake elevation’s downward trend over time.

Request for Proposals Announcement

The program is seeking temporary, large-volume (minimum of 1,000 acre-feet of diverted water) lease proposals that meet certain eligibility requirements. Voluntary water transaction proposals must result in the temporary dedication and measurable delivery of the leased water through an approved change application to the Great Salt Lake or its surrounding habitats and wetlands. Preference will be given to proposals that result in greater amounts of water being dedicated to the Great Salt Lake for longer durations, which yield multiple benefits to the lake, its habitats, and ecosystems for the most competitive cost. The application period will open July 23, 2025, and will close October 24, 2025. **All proposals must be submitted to the Office of the Great Salt Lake Commissioner at GreatSaltLake@utah.gov no later than 11:59 PM on October 24, 2025.**

Guiding Principles of the Great Salt Lake Water Delivery Program

These guiding principles are established to ensure the maximal, longest-lasting benefits to the Great Salt Lake are achieved through the use of the funding provided. All project applications must comply with these guiding principles. Projects determined to not comply with these principles will not be considered for funding.

1. **Do no harm.**
   The intent of the Great Salt Lake Water Delivery Program is to provide the maximum possible benefit to the Great Salt Lake through the implementation of a diverse set of project varieties that will yield multiple benefits to the Great Salt Lake. Proposals that could lead to an increase in consumptive use of water, harmful impacts to the watershed's ecology, ecosystems, or habitats, or other harmful or negative consequences will not be considered eligible for GSLWDP funding.

2. **Measure and monitor.**
   Benefits provided for the Great Salt Lake through the implementation of GSLWDP proposals must be measurable and verifiable. Projects that include measurement and/or telemetry monitoring must include a long-term monitoring plan. Voluntary water transactions must result in measurable, verifiable delivery of leased water into the Great Salt Lake for the duration of the lease term. Such measurement infrastructure must be made accessible and available to the Division of Water Rights to ensure the long-term viability of the project, and to provide a method to verifiably deliver water to the Great Salt Lake.

3. **Use available resources responsibly.**
   There is a substantial need for financial resources in order to meet many of the challenges faced by the Great Salt Lake. This highlights the need to make the most responsible use of the resources available. If a project proposal is found to have a potential risk of failure to complete the project within the proposed timeframe, or if the benefits that would result from the implementation of a project are found to be insufficient relative to the cost of the project, or another concern that a project proposal may not represent a responsible use of GSLWDP funds arises, then that project will not be considered eligible for funding.

4. **Maintain consistency with the Great Salt Lake Strategic Plan**
   The Great Salt Lake Strategic Plan defines criteria for viable solutions to the challenges faced by the Great Salt Lake. Project proposals should be able to meet this same criteria. Project proposals must be:
   - ecologically sustainable,
   - economically feasible,
   - politically possible,
   - technically feasible, and
   - legally sound.

Funding Availability

Up to $50 million is available to be allocated to the three different project categories based on several factors, including but not limited to: project readiness/feasibility, connectivity to other projects that benefit the GSL ecosystem and water delivered to the Great Salt Lake. Therefore, the funding distribution will be determined by the GSLWDP Evaluation Committee after reviewing project submissions and making final determinations.

Eligible Voluntary Water Transactions

Proposals must meet all of the following criteria:

- The applicant:
    - is a water right owner, or
    - owns shares to an irrigation or canal company that entitles them to the use of water, and:
        - has obtained consent from the board of the irrigation or canal company to engage in such a water transaction.

- The proposed transaction must:
    - comply with the Great Salt Lake Water Delivery Program Guiding Principles
    - be beneficial to the hydrology of the Great Salt Lake Basin,
    - include water that is described by a perfected water right,
    - result in the filing and approval of a corresponding change application dedicating the water to the Great Salt Lake,
    - involve surface water that is native to the Great Salt Lake Basin,
    - and
        - be a full-season lease of a minimum of 1000 acre-feet of water, or
        - be a lease of a measurable and verifiable volume of water associated with a system conservation or ecosystem & habitat project proposal you have submitted or will submit to the GSLWDP.

If you are unsure of whether your proposal meets these criteria, or is suitable for consideration for Voluntary Water Transaction funding, please submit your proposal anyway. All applications received before the application deadline will be reviewed to determine if it is eligible for funding through the GSLWDP. Applicants may be contacted for more information regarding their application if it is needed by the Evaluation Committee to make an accurate determination regarding the application.

If you are ineligible for GSLWDP funding but are interested in leasing, contact the Office of the Great Salt Lake Commissioner (GreatSaltLake@utah.gov) or the Great Salt Lake Watershed Enhancement Trust (GSLWET@audubon.org) directly to explore other possibilities for leasing your water.

Leasing Information:

- Agricultural Land ("Greenbelt Status"): Leases of water typically used on land subject to agricultural property assessment by the county assessor will be accompanied by a plan addressed to the county assessor informing them of the lessor's participation in a water management program to ensure the property assessment remains unchanged in accordance with 59-2-503(10).

- Change Application: To receive funding, an approved change application co-signed by the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands or the Division of Wildlife Resources will be required as part of the leasing process in order to properly dedicate the water to the Great Salt Lake. The Division of Water Rights and GSLCO are available for consultation regarding change applications. A change application does not need to be submitted prior to applying for GSLWDP funding.
- Lease Term: Total lease term is negotiable. Longer lease terms may be given preference over shorter terms.
- Lessee: Except as noted, the Office of the Great Salt Lake shall be the named lessee on any GSLWDP leases, consistent with the commissioner's authority to negotiate leases for water or water rights for the Great Salt Lake, subject to Utah Code 73-32-202. In certain cases, the lease may be held by the Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands, or the Division of Wildlife Resources instead of GSLCO.
    - Leases will be subject to review and potential recommendation by the Great Salt Lake Trust Council in addition to the Great Salt Lake Water Delivery Program Evaluation Committee.
    - The Office of the Great Salt Lake Commissioner shall consult with the Commissioner of the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food regarding any leases of agricultural water.
- NEPA: Voluntary transactions funded under the GSLWDP must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other applicable federal environmental laws. The Bureau of Reclamation is willing to consult with applicants prior to application submission to make a preliminary determination regarding the documentation that will be required to comply with the applicable NEPA standard, and other applicable environmental laws. To arrange for a consultation, contact the Office of the Great Salt Lake Commissioner at GreatSaltLake@utah.gov. The Bureau of Reclamation will make the final determination of the documentation requirements during the project selection phase of the program. Funding recipients will be responsible to prepare the necessary documentation for Reclamation's review and signature.
- Payment amount: Transaction price is negotiable. Preference will be given to proposed transactions that result in the dedication of the greatest volume of water for the most competitive price.
- W9 Form and other necessary documentation: Lessors will be required to complete and provide a W9 form in order to facilitate the voluntary water transaction and lessor's payment. Additional documentation may be required prior to the release of funds, such as Utah Division of Finance forms, proof of ownership of a water right or water shares, or other forms of documentation.

Disclosure of Potential Conflict of Interest or Relationships

The applicant must disclose any potential conflict of interest or relationships between the project team and any of the following: Office of the Great Salt Lake Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation, or GSLWDP Evaluation Committee members. The following agencies and organizations are represented on the GSLWDP Evaluation Committee:

- Office of the Great Salt Lake Commissioner

- Utah Department of Natural Resources
- Utah Department of Agriculture and Food
- Utah Division of Water Rights
- Utah Division of Water Resources
- Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
- Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands
- Governor's Office of Planning and Budget
- Great Salt Lake Watershed Enhancement Trust

Timeline and Process:
- **July 23, 2025:** First day to submit applications
- **October 24, 2025:** Last day to submit applications
- **October 27 - November 28, 2025:** Committee evaluation & grant recipient selection
- **November 28, 2025 - January 15, 2026:** Contracting
- **December 2025 - August 2030:** Execute projects
- **August 2030 - July 2031:** Closeout project contracts

Applications will be reviewed and selected by the GSLWDP Evaluation Committee, composed of state resource experts, after applications are due. The committee, inclusive of the Great Salt Lake Commissioner, will make recommendations to USBR, who will make a final determination on recommended projects. Successful applicants will be notified of award at the conclusion of the evaluation process.

Process for Application Submission
1. Prepare a water transaction proposal using the provided form that meets the transaction eligibility criteria outlined above.
    a. (*Optional*): Engage in a pre-consultation with the Division of Water Rights, and/or prepare a draft change application to be submitted in the event that your proposal is selected for GSLWDP funding. Proposals accompanied by a draft change application will be rated higher in the review process.
2. Submit your proposal(s). All proposals must be submitted to the Office of the Great Salt Lake Commissioner at GreatSaltLake@utah.gov by 11:59 PM on October 24, 2025.
3. A determination regarding your proposal will be made by November 28, 2025. If your proposal is not selected for GSLWDP funding, your participation in the process will conclude.
4. If your proposal is selected, a change application must be prepared (if not already) and filed with the Division of Water Rights in order to facilitate the dedication and delivery of the leased water to the Great Salt Lake. All change applications must be submitted to the Division of Water Rights in a manner to allow the Division of Water Rights sufficient time to process the application. Depending on the specifics of the leased water and when the change application is approved, it is possible that the term of the lease may not begin until the following water year.
5. GSLCO will prepare a lease agreement in accordance with the established pricing and term from the project proposal unless agreed otherwise in writing. W9 forms and Division

of Finance Vendor Creation Forms must be completed prior to, or concurrently, with the completion of the lease agreement.

   a. For individuals looking to lease water shares, it will be necessary to provide proof of ownership of such shares in the company. Additionally, applicants intending to lease shares of water must include a letter from the company in favor of the applicant's intended lease of company water shares.

6. Payments will be made to lessors with a signed lease agreement, a complete W9, a complete Division of Finance Vendor Creation Form, and an approved change application on or before the last day (June 30th) of the next full fiscal year following the effective date of the lease. If the lessor is unable to complete all required documentation and agreements, or if the State Engineer rejects the change application, the agreement will be nullified.

Contracting and Invoicing

Contracts for GSLWDP funding will be awarded through the Department of Natural Resources, and will be finalized within 60 days of a project award. A complete W9 form and a complete FI-170 or FI-171 (whichever is applicable) must be provided prior to any funds being awarded.

Transaction Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated against the priorities outlined in the table below. Each application will receive a ranking for each priority.

The relative importance of the priorities listed below is as follows: Fundamental Priorities are of the greatest importance, followed by High Priorities as the next most important, and Moderate Priorities as the third-most important. Priorities of the same classification are of comparatively equal importance. All priorities <u>must</u> be addressed in the project proposal.

Criteria	Priority
Will this transaction result in new inflows to the Great Salt Lake, or does it dedicate existing Great Salt Lake inflows?	Fundamental Priority
Are there any concerns about a lack of hydrologic availability relating to this transaction proposal that may result in an inability to shepherd the leased water to the lake?	Fundamental Priority
Describe the economic justification for your proposed transaction price.	High Priority
Describe the path the water would need to follow in order to reach the Great Salt Lake in a measurable and verifiable manner.	High Priority

Is this transaction paired with another GSLWDP project?	Moderate Priority
Have you completed a pre-consultation regarding your proposal with the Utah Division of Water Rights?	Moderate Priority
What is the present status (if any) of the change application associated with this transaction proposal?	Moderate Priority