The question has been asked, why do we need a Bear River Project? A combination of population growth, economic expansion and an extended drought from 1999-2005 has shown Utahns that we are very vulnerable to the variability of weather cycles. At the end of this past cycle, Salt Lake County was virtually out of water. With extensive public cooperation, water utilities were able to reduce water consumption by 17 percent during this period. It is commonly believed that the next extended drought cycle will be more severe simply because there will be more people. While conservation will be a very important part of providing water in future years, it is very apparent that additional water development will be needed to meet the needs of our children and grandchildren. A Bear River Project will be a part of our future water supply.

In 1985 with future water demands in mind, due to projected population growth, the Salt Lake County Water Conservancy District (name changed in 1999 to Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District) petitioned the Utah Division of Water Resources for help in developing a Bear River Project. A Bear River Task Force was created. It was comprised of legislators, water leaders and other officials that recommended passage of the Bear River Development Act in 1991 and authorized 220,000 acre-feet of water to be developed from the Bear River. Sixty-thousand acre-feet of this was allocated to the Bear River Water Conservancy District, 60,000 acre-feet to Cache County, 50,000 acre-feet to the Weber Basin Water Conservancy District, and 50,000 acre-feet to the Salt Lake County Water Conservancy District. A finding of the legislation was that the Bear River was one of the last major sources of developable water in the State. The Act identified potential dam sites and authorized the Division of Water Resources to develop potential projects. Work on these projects can begin once 70% or more of the water has been contracted for.

The Act provided that 100 percent of all construction and environmental mitigation costs of developing water allocated to municipal and industrial uses and 25 percent of similar costs allocated to agricultural uses would have to be repaid to the State by the contracting entities.

The Act further specified that the State would design, construct and finance facilities to deliver the water allocated to the Weber Basin Water Conservancy District and the Salt Lake County Water Conservancy District to Willard Bay and that the two conservancy districts would be required to develop their own facilities for treatment and transmission of the water to where it would be needed.

It was originally thought that the Salt Lake County Water Conservancy District would need Bear River water by 2015, but aggressive conservation programs and additional Central Utah Project Water from the Utah Lake System now promised for 2015, have pushed that date back by 10-20 years. It is expected that Bear River Water will be needed as West Bench lands on the west side of the Salt Lake Valley develop.

The Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District current water supply that could be delivered through an extended drought is as follows:

| Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District: Current Water Supply |
Central Utah Project 50,000 AF  
Salt Lake County Groundwater 20,000 AF  
Welby-Jacob Exchange (Deer Creek Reservoir & Provo and Weber Rivers) 20,000 AF  

**Total 90,000 AF**

Salt Lake County’s population is projected to increase by almost 700,000 people between now and 2050. With most of the State’s water systems already over-appropriated, there are not a lot of places to look for additional water. If Jordan Valley’s conservation goals of reducing per capita water consumption by 25 percent are met, perhaps only an additional 90,000 acre-feet of new water will be needed by 2050. This may be met as shown on the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District: Future Water Supply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southwest Groundwater Treatment (groundwater remediation project in partnership with Kennecott Copper and the State Department of Environmental Quality) 8,000 AF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ULS (additional Central Utah Project Water from the Utah Lake System) 22,000 AF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear River Project 50,000 AF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wastewater Recycling Project 10,000 AF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total 90,000 AF</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The estimated cost to deliver the full allocation of Bear River Water today to the Weber Basin Water Conservancy District and the Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District is about $700 million with half the burden falling on the State to develop the water and deliver it to Willard Bay and half on the water districts to treat the water and deliver it to their wholesale agencies.

There are many uncertainties with regard to developing a water supply for 2050. Many questions will have to be answered in coming years.

- Will population growth and economic development exceed or lag behind current projections of the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget?  
- How much agricultural water will be available for conversion to municipal uses?  
- Will environmental issues and interests require a greater portion of our existing or future water supply?  
- Will other projected water supply projects such as Central Utah’s ULS Project and wastewater recycling be available in a timely manner?

Can we meet future conservation goals in a timely manner and on a continuing basis? Much of the conservation to date has been attained on a voluntary basis. Clearly, water conservation will play a very important role in meeting Utah’s future water needs and helping Utahns use municipal and industrial water more efficiently.

Large water projects have typically taken many years to develop. Public need and public policy will ultimately dictate when Bear River Project water is made available to the Salt Lake Valley and how much may be available. With the development of the Lake Powell Pipeline to take water from the Colorado River to meet the growing needs in southwestern Utah in Washington, Iron and Kane counties, the Bear River Project may indeed be Utah’s last major water hole.