



PROVO RIVER DELTA

- + RECOVERING the June Sucker
- + RESTORING the Natural Ecosystem
- + IMPROVING Recreational Experiences



Autumn 2022

A RIVER WILL RUN TO IT

In early 2023, two and a half years after taking its first scoop of delta dirt, an excavator will be taking a final scoop to connect the Provo River to the restored delta. The excavator - along with other heavy equipment and a talented construction crew - has worked tirelessly to remain on schedule since project construction began in 2020. The majority of habitat construction efforts are now complete. To date, more than 90% of delta ponds and 22,000 linear feet of new river channels have been excavated, totaling 43 acres and more than 4 miles. The north half of Skipper Bay Dike has been lowered and stabilized and four outlet channels stand ready to carry Provo River flows into Utah Lake and allow it to once again merge with a restored delta.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

This newsletter is to update you on project progress. For more information, visit: provoriverdelta.us

RESILIENCE THROUGH REVEGETATION



Our team has been working throughout the project to ensure we offset construction impacts of tree removal and ground disturbance by seeding and planting a diverse suite of native trees, shrubs, grasses, and forbs.

Over the last couple years, Spring Creek and North Fork Native Plant Nurseries installed tens of thousands of plants in the project area. This fall they will install close to 75,000 plants in areas along the new channels and ponds of the delta. We will also continue to work with Utah Division of Wildlife Resources this fall to seed 30.5 acres of disturbed wetland, riparian and upland areas with seed mix that includes 33 different species of native plants, and to successfully control invasive weeds across the site. Our revegetation effort will continue with major fall planting events in 2023 and 2024.

Additionally, we have enlisted local volunteer groups and schools to help establish these plants and to maintain stewardship of these habitats into the future. It takes a village to raise a forest, and we will continue to work with partners to make the delta come to Life!



(continued from front)

A RIVER WILL RUN TO IT

The current phase of the Provo River Delta Restoration Project is the most complex yet. During the next few months all the work and planning over the last decade will come to fruition as we excavate the remaining 1,000 feet of channel and divert the existing Provo River into the new delta. We are busy finalizing needed construction easements, staging equipment and materials in the area where the diversion will be built, and coordinating with stakeholders. Massive revegetation efforts have been ongoing.

Once Provo River's flow is diverted, the restored delta will provide long-term benefits for both people and fish. It will include the shallow water habitat necessary for young June sucker to grow to adults, meeting a key recovery element for this threatened native fish that only lives naturally in Utah Lake. And over the next year, recreation features will be built and access to the Delta will be provided, contributing to the quality of life for all residents and visitors to the area. Features include public access to protected open space, new and improved trails, a viewing tower, interpretive exhibits, non-motorized boat launches and new trailhead parking areas. The existing Provo River channel will remain, will continue to receive streamflow, and will be managed as a community fishery and recreational amenity.

CULTIVATING UTAH'S FUTURE LAND STEWARDS

Volunteers and next generation land stewards have contributed greatly to keeping the Provo River Delta project on track.

In 2022, for the third straight year, we partnered with the Utah

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Conservation Corps (UCC) to provide on-the-ground project assistance. This year's UCC crews put hundreds of hours of muscle and heart into building coconut fiber riverbanks, weed control and revegetation. In addition, Hailey Sermersheim, a UVU senior earning her degree in Botany with a minor in Outdoor Recreation, joined us this summer through the UCC Individual Placement AmeriCorps program. She logged 450 service hours working side by side with the UCC and construction crews and students in the field, talking to trail users, and helping with tours, field trips and stewardship events.

Also by fall of 2022, 235 community members had pitched in over 400 work hours during 16 stewardship events. Volunteers included many students from elementary to university levels, teachers and professors, anglers, scouts, and trail users. Willow cuttings were harvested and many tamarisks and other weeds manually removed to give native vegetation the best chance at taking hold.

We are so grateful for all the volunteers' hard work and hope their experiences at Provo River Delta spark an interest in a career in restoration and conservation. Contact us via our website provoriverdelta.us to learn about stewardship opportunities in 2023.



DELTA TOURS A BIG HIT IN 2022

This year over 300 people took advantage of 23 different site tours to view the Provo River Delta Restoration project up close and personal. The Delta was viewed through the eyes of artists, engineers, historians, community leaders, professors, teachers, students, locals, visitors and recreationists along with fish, mollusk, butterfly, and botanical experts. A Boreal Chorus Frog even made a surprise hop-in guest appearance after a rainy stretch in August!

Public tours and community stewardship events will resume next spring. Visit our website for more info.



FUTURE HOME OF DELTA GATEWAY PARK

The community is getting excited about the new recreation features planned in and around the Delta and one of the key features is the Provo River Delta Gateway Park. Equipment staging and preparations are now underway at the park site. When complete, the family-friendly park will feature a nature-themed playground for children to enjoy while learning about and engaging with the river and riparian ecosystem surrounding the park. The park will connect to existing area trails and also provide a critical waypoint for those traveling the Provo River Parkway Trail, which connects Provo Canyon to Utah Lake and other planned trails heading north. Provo City Parks and Recreation is developing the park with support and funding from the Provo Delta Project. Construction is scheduled to begin in summer/fall of 2023 and the park should be open to the public in 2024.

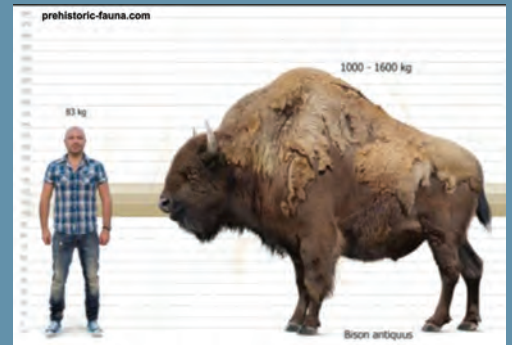
CHARTING THE FUTURE OF UTAH LAKE'S FISHERY

Utah Lake is one of the most popular and diverse fishing destinations in the State. It provides anglers with excellent sportfishing opportunities to catch largemouth bass, channel catfish, white bass, walleye, and several species of panfish. Utah Lake is also the only location where the June sucker naturally occurs and where a concerted effort is being made to restore habitat like the Provo River Delta, which is intended to support recovery of the threatened fish. As a means of optimizing sportfishing for the public, while also considering June sucker recovery needs, the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) is working on a comprehensive Utah Lake fisheries management plan to guide fisheries management into the future.

UDWR is using a collaborative process to develop the fisheries management plan and is taking input from a diverse group including representatives from State and Federal agencies, June Sucker Recovery Implementation Program staff, and members of the angling public who represent established angling groups as well as grassroots anglers. The planning collaborative is developing an expansive list of goals and objectives that will be refined as the process moves forward. Topics being considered include incorporation of diverse angling opportunities, angler access, management of invasive species, June sucker recovery and management, improving water quality, and promoting outreach and education. Future components of the planning process will include presentations of a draft plan to Utah Lake area angling groups for their comment, as well as opportunities to solicit feedback from the general public. A draft plan is expected to be released in early 2023, with the final plan completion date slated for early 2024.



A BIG FIND



On September 24th, 1776, the Dominguez and Escalante Expedition had their first look at Utah Valley and camped on Utah Lake at the mouth of the Provo River. Their diary gives one of the first written descriptions of the area, recounting Utah Lake as abounding in several species of good fish, geese, beavers, and amphibians, and the surrounding land as flat and of good farmland quality for all kinds of crops.

The rich resources of Utah Lake and the Provo River floodplain have supported generations of people for over 10,000 years. To make sure evidence of these inhabitants possibly encountered during delta excavation activities is protected, a cultural resource monitor has been on site regularly during project construction. Finds have included fragments of rock, called groundstone, used to process plant material, a large polished rectangular piece of granite called a mano, and pieces of flaked stone, made during the manufacture of tools like arrowheads or knives. Individual flakes were sharp enough to process animal carcasses.

Along with evidence of human occupation, the Delta Project area also holds evidence of Ice Age animals. Skeletal remains encountered this fall of a *Bison antiquus* have been estimated to be over 15,000 years old. *Bison antiquus* were 25% larger than today's bison, stood almost 8 feet tall and 15 feet long, and had horns that measured 3 feet from tip to tip!