



PROVO RIVER DELTA

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



Spring 2022

A YEAR OF BUILDING CONNECTIONS

As we enter year three of project construction, our focus is all about building connections. In February, we constructed the western portions of the four outlet channels that will connect Utah Lake to the restored Provo River delta. This spring and summer, we'll lower the entire north half of Skipper Bay Dike - an event that will reconnect the lake with part of the low-lying land area that historically was a marshy bay of Utah Lake (see *The Skipper Bay Connection*).

Other efforts during 2022 will focus on excavating remaining sections of river channel that will connect under the new Lakeview Parkway

(See "Building Connections" continued inside...)



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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW BRINGS MUCH-NEEDED FUNDING

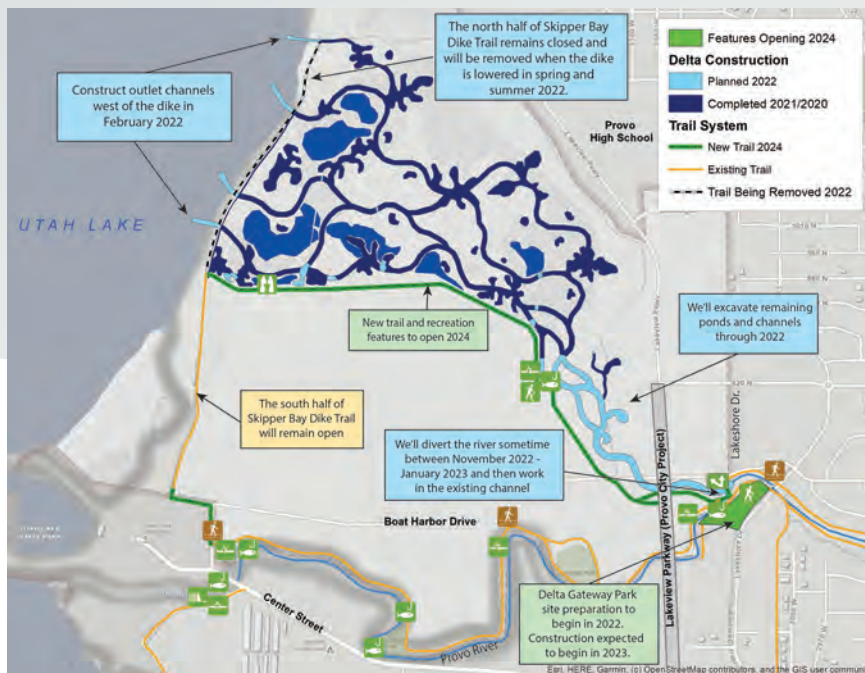


Deputy Secretary of the Interior Tommy Beaudreau tours the Provo River Delta project with Commission Chair Brad Barber to see how infrastructure funding will be used toward project construction.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (Public Law 117-58) passed by Congress and signed by President Biden in December 2021 provides \$10 million for the Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission. The Commission has committed this funding to construction of the Provo River Delta Restoration Project.

The project is a key element of the June Sucker Recovery Implementation Program (JSRIP). The JSRIP, established in 2002, has dual goals. One goal is to recover the June sucker so it no longer requires protection under the Endangered Species Act. The other goal is to allow continued operation of current water projects and future development of water resources. These dual goals are linked. As long as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determines the JSRIP is making sufficient progress towards recovery of June sucker, current use and future development of federal water projects may continue uninterrupted. It is clear that Congress recognizes and supports the dual goals of the JSRIP, as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides another

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BUILDING CONNECTIONS

(Continued from front page.)

bridge (under construction by Provo City) and continue east to the diversion point on the Provo River. We plan to divert the river's flow into the delta between November 2022 and January 2023, completing the process of connecting the hydrology of the restored delta to the river upstream and to the lake downstream. This connected delta will provide habitat essential for survival of young June sucker, a threatened native fish that only lives naturally in Utah Lake.

High quality habitat is currently lacking in the existing lower Provo River. Downstream from the aptly-named Lakeshore Drive, the existing river flows in a leveed channel that was dredged into the historic lakebed. The Provo Delta Restoration Project will reconnect the river with a broad floodplain and restore productive wetland delta habitat. The existing river will remain in place, will continue to receive streamflow, and will be managed as a community fishery and recreational amenity. The Delta Project will also create new recreation opportunities including new trails linked to existing networks, new trailhead parking areas, a viewing tower, interpretive exhibits, and a new park. These features are expected to be open to the public in 2024.

(Infrastructure Law continued.)

\$40 million to Central Utah Water Conservancy District, which will accelerate construction of Central Utah Project water delivery pipelines and systems.

This funding comes at a critical time for us, as the 2022 and 2023 Delta Project construction seasons will be extensive and expensive. The \$10 million to help recover a threatened species while providing numerous outdoor recreational opportunities reflects the high value Utahns place on clean water supplies, a healthy environment, and outdoor recreation as essential components for the future.

THE SKIPPER BAY CONNECTION

At the time Utah Valley was settled by pioneers, the Bureau of Land Management mapped the Skipper Bay area, where the delta project is now being constructed, as underwater and physically part of Utah Lake.

Despite construction of various phases of Skipper Bay Dike between the 20s and 80s, periods of unusually high lake levels have demonstrated this area is still hydrologically connected to the lake and prone to flooding.

This year the north half of Skipper Bay Dike will be lowered, and the former bay area will once again be physically connected with Utah Lake. Next year a berm will be built along the south boundary of the delta project providing flood protection for lands south of the project.



UTAH LAKE SCAVENGER HUNT

The Utah Lake Scavenger Hunt returns this year starting Friday, June 3rd at 8 AM and ending Sunday, June 12th at 10 PM.

To learn more about how to join the game, visit the Utah Lake Commission's website at: www.utahlake.org/utah-lake-savenger-hunt-2022/



SECOND SATURDAY SITE TOURS ARE BACK!

We're happy to announce the return of our Second Saturday Site tours of the Provo River Delta Restoration Project. The tours and accompanying stewardship activities were our most popular events last year. Sign up to check out newly excavated ponds and outlet channels up close, learn about the riverine section of the delta currently under construction, or sign up to participate in a stewardship event. Bring your curiosity along with the whole family, all ages are welcome. Tours will be held the second Saturday of each month usually at 9 or 11 AM until October. Volunteer projects are typically organized after the site tours. Advanced sign-up is required for both. If you're interested, complete the form on our website's contact us page at www.provoriverdelta.us/contact-us



CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF JUNE SUCKER RECOVERY

In the spring of 2002, after a few years of planning, representatives from state, local, and federal agencies came together to create the June Sucker Recovery Implementation Program (JSRIP). The program's purpose was to recover the June sucker while providing Endangered Species Act compliance for regional water projects. Looking back over the past 20 years, the JSRIP has done a variety of projects ranging from non-native fish management to public outreach. Below are a few highlights:

- *Removing over 15,000 tons of carp from Utah Lake*
- *Habitat restoration projects along Hobble Creek*
- *Providing water in Provo River and Hobble Creek to support river flows*
- *Creating a June sucker captive rearing and stocking program*
- *Tracking changes in the Utah Lake ecosystem and fish community*
- *Producing "Utah Lake: Legacy" a documentary and book on the history of Utah Lake*



Photos Courtesy of Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

These and other projects have improved the status of a fish species that was on the brink of extinction 20 years ago. While we celebrate these accomplishments, we are mindful of the threats that still must be addressed as part of the recovery effort. The Provo River Delta Restoration Project will address some of those threats by providing essential habitat currently lacking in the lower Provo River.

Celebrate by looking for spawning June sucker: biologists are anticipating conditions in the Provo River this May will be ideal for observing June sucker. Adult June sucker will enter the Provo River to spawn in early May and likely be visible throughout the month. From along the Provo River trail, watch closely at riffle sections in the river where males can often be seen defending spawning sites from each other. The fish will also congregate in deeper pools where it's possible to see hundreds huddled together. Please remember to give them their space and don't harass them as they are especially vulnerable during spawning.

CH-CH-CH-CHANGES!

As anyone who's embarked on a home repair or remodeling project knows, plans can change or shift once you get into the details. The decision to construct the Provo River Delta Restoration Project was made in 2015 when the Final Environmental Impact Statement was completed and the Mitigation Commission and U.S. Department of the Interior Central Utah Project Completion Act Office issued Records of Decision. In the seven years since, we've had dozens of meetings and discussions with project designers, partners, and stakeholders. We've mulled over the value versus cost of certain design elements. More current data and analyses have become available that affect our design criteria. And other entities' plans for lands and facilities near the delta have also changed and evolved.

With all these changes and all we've learned since 2015, it has become apparent that there is a need to modify four aspects of the project from how they were described in 2015. These include modifications to the road connection of Boat Harbor Drive with Lakeview Parkway and Lakeshore Drive; the elevation of the berm along the south boundary of the delta area; the allocation of flow to the existing channel; and the design and operation of the small downstream dam under high Utah Lake levels.

More detailed information describing these proposed modifications, the reasons for them, and the anticipated effects of implementing them, is available on our website at www.provoriverdelta.us.