



State of Utah

Department of
Environmental Quality

Amanda Smith
Executive Director

Brad T Johnson
Deputy Director

GARY R. HERBERT.
Governor

GREG BELL
Lieutenant Governor

NEWS RELEASE

Tuesday, January 3, 2012

Contact:

John Whitehead, (801) 536-4314
Deputy Director, Division of Water Quality

Study on low-oxygen risks to Jordan River for Public Review

Salt Lake City, Utah – The Utah Division of Water Quality (DWQ) released today for public comment the first part of a draft water quality study on the impact of low dissolved oxygen levels in the lower Jordan River.

Excess organic matter in the lower Jordan River during late summer is contributing to the low dissolved oxygen levels that may hurt fish and other aquatic organisms.

“The Jordan River is a prime example of an urban stream that has suffered ill effects of a high level of flow management, industrial and urban discharges, and significant changes to its riparian corridor all of which have contributed to its poor health,” said Walt Baker, director of DWQ.

The first phase of the study focuses on low dissolved oxygen levels in segments of the river. Sufficient dissolved oxygen in the Jordan River is vital for aquatic life to exist. The second phase will identify the causes of the low dissolved oxygen which will lead directly to an implementation strategy to restore the river. In the end, the so-called Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study will establish the threshold on the daily dose of pollutants to bring the river into compliance with state and federal water quality standards. An advisory committee comprised of non-DWQ technical experts has helped steer the development of the study.

An open house will be held from 4-6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21 in DEQ’s Board Room 1015 at the Multi Agency State Office Building, 195 North 1950 West.

“We welcome the public’s input on the TMDL study, a critical first step in helping the public to understand the harmful effects of low oxygen levels in the river,” said Baker. “We will then embark on a multiyear data-gathering effort with other agencies to identify the causes of the problem and implement a management strategy for improvements that will ensure the long-term sustainability of this critical resource.”

The comment period will run from January 3, 2012 through March 31, 2012. The draft study is available at <http://www.waterquality.utah.gov/TMDL/JORDAN/index.htm>. Comments must be

-MORE-

submitted via email to hilaryarens@utah.gov or via post to Hilary Arens, Division of Water Quality, PO Box 144870, Salt Lake City, UT 84114 no later than close of business on March 31, 2012. Responses to comments will be compiled and presented with the draft TMDL study to the Utah Water Quality Board for approval to proceed with the next phase of the study and endorsement for future water quality improvement efforts.

###