

GREAT SALT LAKE WATER QUALITY STEERING COMMITTEE

Purpose and Objectives

Great Salt Lake is a unique terminal lake adjacent to a growing metropolitan area. The lake is a critical ecological resource as well as an important recreational and mineral resource. The 1972 federal Clean Water Act requires states to designate beneficial uses of water bodies and establish water quality standards to protect those beneficial uses. Designated beneficial uses of Great Salt Lake include primary and secondary recreation, aquatic wildlife, and mineral extraction. Current water quality standards are narrative. At this time, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Water Quality is beginning the process of establishing site-specific standards for open waters of Great Salt Lake.

The Department of Environmental Quality has established the Great Salt Lake Water Quality Steering Committee (“GSL Water Quality Steering Committee”) to guide the process of developing numeric standards for the lake. This group consists of federal and state regulatory agencies, other public entities, conservation organizations, recreation groups, and industrial users of the lake.

The purpose of the GSL Water Quality Steering Committee is to recommend site-specific Numeric Water Quality Standards, beginning with Selenium, for the open waters of Great Salt Lake that will prevent impairment of beneficial uses and sustain the natural resources of the lake and associated wetlands. Specific objectives of the group are:

1. Create a partnership among stakeholders including industry, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations to:
 - a. Gain broad acceptance of process and results
 - b. Provide access to expertise and experience
 - c. Provide multiple funding sources
2. Conduct a transparent public process by:
 - a. Identifying stakeholders
 - b. Receiving input
 - c. Sharing results
 - d. Seeking consensus
3. Establish, at the beginning of the process, and maintain a scientific advisory panel to:
 - a. identify gaps in scientific understanding of the lake chemistry and ecology
 - b. advise the Steering Committee on funding applications
 - c. prioritize water quality parameters of concern
 - d. define and approve work plans for scientific studies
 - e. provide for independent peer review of scientific studies
 - f. recommend science-based numeric standards to Steering Committee
4. Sponsor and guide scientific research by:
 - a. Defining study objectives (e.g. fate, bioaccumulation, toxicity)
 - b. Securing funding
 - c. Specifying, or sponsoring development of, appropriate study methods
 - d. Sponsoring data collection
 - e. Reporting results
5. Adhere to federal and state [statutes,] regulations and guidelines for standards development
 - a. Coordinate with EPA Region 8 on process for developing site specific standards
 - b. Utilize results and recommendations of scientific research to determine appropriate numeric standards
 - c. Recommend numeric standards to Utah Water Quality Board for incorporation into the state Water Quality Administrative Rules.