

Willard Bay Settlement Request for Proposals

The Division of Water Quality is soliciting project proposals that will enhance and protect waterways and environmental areas that may have been affected or related to the March 2013 release of diesel in the Willard Bay State Park. Examples of acceptable mitigation projects include but are not limited to: environmental projects, infrastructure improvements, and studies or educational activities/events which serve the purpose of protecting or improving water quality and/or the ecology of natural systems. Proposals must include a detailed description of the mitigation project, a cost breakdown showing how the funds will be used, and a plan for implementation of the project. The implementation plan shall include a timeline for implementation, completion of the project, and submission of final document(s) verifying completion of the project.

A two phase process will be used to evaluate proposals and select projects for funding. The first phase will evaluate proposals submitted on the form included below and select projects for funding. Initial proposals should be limited to a six (6) page maximum. Supplemental documents such as letters of support, information to demonstrate previous project implementation and other relative supportive documents may be submitted in addition to the six (6) page application form. Successful applicants will then be notified to submit detailed project plans in the second phase. Upon approval of the detailed project implementation plans, funding will be authorized by the Director of the Utah Division of Water Quality.

The deadlines for proposal submission, detailed project plans and funding authorization are provided here:

- May 5, 2014, 5:00 p.m.: Submission Deadline for project proposals
- May 28, 2014: Projects selected, funds allocated, & Proposers notified (Accepted proposals will be posted on DWQ website.)
- January 1, 2018: Completion of project and final reports due

The following criteria must be met by each funded project:

1. Proposed project must enhance the natural environment by improving conditions for one or more of the following: wildlife, habitat, native vegetation, water quality or emergency response or provide scientific and/or educational enhancements to the citizens of Utah in the context of the above named environmental areas.
2. Proposed project must benefit Utah citizens by providing one or more of the following: enhancements of infrastructure, educational opportunity, environmental benefit or recreational opportunity.
3. Proposer must have either an interest in any land directly involved in the project (e.g., fee title, easement, or other legal agreement that gives all needed rights to enhance the land involved in the project) or written permission/contract to conduct project activity on property.
4. Proposed project must be capable of being completed within 4 years.
5. Proposer must be capable of implementing the proposed project.

Proposals will be scored based upon the following criteria:

Strength of the Project

1. Project benefits the area within Willard Bay State Park or the ecosystems in close proximity.
2. Project benefits the natural environment.
3. Project increases the ecosystem services being provided by the enhanced waterway.
4. Project has social benefits.
5. Project size – how large is the total area that will be directly enhanced by the proposed project?
6. Project connectivity – how does the proposed enhanced project area connect to other natural areas or projects.
7. Project proposer can leverage additional funds.
8. Project cost-effectiveness.
9. Administrative expenses.

Strength of the project team

10. The proposer has the ability to carry out the project as shown by successful past experience in carrying out similar projects.
11. The proposer can ensure, through contract or other written agreement, long term maintenance (if applicable) will sustain the project into the future.
12. The project has multi-agency support and collaboration.

A completed proposal form, no more than six (6) pages, plus supplemental documents, must be submitted in hard copy or emailed electronically (preferred) by May 5, 2014 to the Division of Water Quality to the attention of:

Emily Bartusek
Division of Water Quality
PO Box 144870
Salt Lake City, UT 84114
ebartusek@utah.gov

UTAH DIVISION OF WATER QUALITY

195 North 1950 West
PO Box 144870
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4870

Willard Bay Project Proposal Form

NOTE: Proposal must be no longer than 6 pages. Supplemental documents such as letters of support, information to demonstrate previous project implementation and other relative supportive documents may be submitted in addition to this form.

Applicant Name: Paul Burnett

Co-Applicant Name(s) (if applicable): _____ Project Title: Lower Weber River Floodplain Acquisition

Agency or Business Name (if applicable): Trout Unlimited

Mailing Address: 5279 S 150 E City: Ogden State: UT Zip: 84405

Phone: (801)781-7180 E-mail: pburnett@tu.org

Individual Non-Profit Govt. Agency Academic Commercial Other

1. Estimated Project Costs:

Land Acquisition (36 acres @\$3000 per Acre +18% Contingency)	\$ <u>127,400</u>
Appraisal Costs	\$ <u>10,000</u>
Admin (Provided by TU)	\$ <u>10,800</u>
TOTAL	\$ <u>148,200</u>

Other sources of project funding:

Funding Source	Amount
Weber Pathways	\$33,000
Willard Bay Mitigation	\$114,400
TU	\$10,800
Total	\$148,200

Total project cost including other sources of funding: \$ 148,200

(please include bids for labor, equipment, rentals, etc.)

2. Describe the purpose and need of the project: _

The critical need in this segment of the lower Weber River is floodplain protection, restoration and recreational access. The primary purpose of this project is to:

- Permanently protect critical floodplain areas from development
- Provide a template for future floodplain restoration
- Provide recreational access to approximately 1 mile of the Weber River

The Weber River is the second-most popular stream fishery in Utah, it provides drinking and irrigation water to approximately 21% of Utah's population and it is one of the most at-risk river basins in the state due to current land and water demands and past habitat impacts. Many reaches of the Weber River have

been highly degraded by land management activities and direct impacts to the river channel caused by flood control and infrastructure construction. In some places large berms have been constructed to confine flood waters into straightened trapezoidal channels. Although this resulted in localized flood control benefits, these actions have greatly impacted riparian habitat, larger scale floodplain dynamics and consequently water quality. Over time, land conversion and development in the areas adjacent to these flood control features has greatly limited the potential for floodplain restoration. However a few places still remain. The properties near the mouth of Weber Canyon downstream of the I-84 Bridge are an example of floodplain confinement by these berms, however much of the land remains undeveloped, which provides the potential to allow floodplain restoration and proactive development of a pathway to facilitate public access to the Weber River.

This project would commence in several phases, we are seeking funding for the first phase:

- Phase 1: Land acquisition – *Current Proposal*
- Phase 2: Floodplain design options – *Future Proposal in cooperation with UDWR*
- Phase 3: Pathway and angler access construction guided by floodplain restoration design – *Future Proposal to Trails Grant Sources*
- Phase 4: Floodplain reconstruction – *Future Proposal to appropriate restoration funding sources*

This project is important and timely. The project was first identified through a US Army Corps of Engineers Section 206 proposal in 2004. Unfortunately after the initial proposal was completed, programmatic funding for Section 206 Ecosystem Restoration was never renewed by congress. Since that time, Weber Pathways, TU and other partners have been trying to work with these specific landowners to acquire pathway easements or permission to restore the floodplain for several years. Unfortunately the project partners lacked financial resources to acquire the property and landowner concerns about public access while they own the property have precluded this project from becoming a reality. Both property owners recently listed their properties for sale, which includes the area that the pathway easement had been targeting, as well as the entire Weber River floodplain for approximately 1 mile of stream. The most critical short term step is to secure the financial resources needed to acquire this critical piece of property.

Funding to secure critical land is often the most challenging to obtain and, in certain situations, results in being the primary impediment to advancing floodplain restoration projects. Further complicating the challenge of conserving critical habitat in the Weber River is the fact that approximately 82% of the entire Weber River watershed, including more than 90% of the Weber River mainstem, is privately owned with restrictions to public access. Nevertheless the Weber River serves as a critical ecological and recreational resource for the local communities in northern Utah. These conditions require a strategic approach to land conservation within the watershed. This proposal focuses on two adjacent parcels of critical floodplain on the lower Weber River. The floodplain in this reach of the Weber River has been completely fragmented from the river due to past flood control measures. If the property is acquired then project partners can prioritize the removal of the existing flood control measures and use updated strategies for managing floodwaters while restoring the floodplain. This will greatly expand the riparian area, which would benefit water quality targets in this reach. Floodplain restoration would also reintroduce natural channel dynamics which supports habitat complexity. Finally, as the Ogden area has grown, more demand has been placed upon its existing pathway system and the recreational resources made available by the Weber and Ogden Rivers. Expanding the pathway further supports this expanding use, which translates to enhanced recreational opportunities and greater stewardship of our rivers.

In addition to the high value recreational resources, the Weber River supports populations of two species of imperiled fish, the bluehead sucker and the Bonneville cutthroat trout. Bluehead sucker are mainstem dwelling fish that require complex and dynamic habitats. Bluehead sucker populations have declined dramatically in recent years. As described in other proposals, a primary source of the decline of the bluehead sucker is believed to be caused by mainstem river habitat fragmentation. Nevertheless, biologists also believe that the loss of habitat complexity in the form of backwater and sidechannel habitats have played a significant role in their decline. This reach of the lower Weber River provides important habitat for Bonneville cutthroat trout.

The proposed project aims to secure critical floodplain habitat to establish a template for floodplain restoration during future years. By protecting these critical parcels, a large area of protected property owned by the UDWR, UDOT and Weber Pathways would be available to meet the mutually beneficial goals to the community and the natural resources.

This project takes place in one of the last remaining bluehead sucker strongholds in the Weber River. Our current understanding of this species supports the idea that these fish require complex and diverse habitats, which historically occurred in these lowland reaches of the Weber River. The space and template are available at this site to reestablish many of the processes that form and create this habitat complexity. Reestablishing river access to the floodplain is the primary strategy to accomplishing these restoration goals.

6. Describe project's connectivity to other natural areas or projects that further enhance wildlife, habitat, natural vegetation, water quality or emergency response:

This project is complimentary to other conservation actions in this reach of the Weber River in the following ways:

- Supports the goals of securing and restoring key mainstem habitat with an eye towards restoring complexity for the Conservation Targets (Bonneville cutthroat trout and bluehead sucker) identified in the Weber River Watershed Plan, 2014
- Compliments fish passage efforts by increasing habitat diversity available to migratory native fish populations
- Advances the Ogden-Weber pathway system by providing additional trail connectivity opportunities
- Supports angler access goals on the Lower Weber River

Over the past year a broad collaborative partnership representing, fish, water quality, water user, agricultural and hydropower interests came together to develop the 2014 Weber River Watershed Plan. The goal of this plan was to update the Weber River Watershed Restoration Action Strategy, which was developed in 2003. The 2014 Weber River Watershed Plan highlighted several specific priority areas and actions needed in the watershed. The coexisting cutthroat trout and bluehead sucker population in the lower Weber River was highlighted as a critical conservation target, and restoring key floodplain habitats to benefit those species were identified as key restoration actions. Few areas remain on the lower Weber River where this opportunity exists.

This proposed project is also complimentary to several other conservation actions taken by various watershed partners in this segment of the Weber River. Through a broad partnership, a diverse project team was able to reconstruct an irrigation diversion, restore fish passage and construct fish screens on the diversion at the mouth of Weber Canyon in close proximity to the proposed project. This lower diversion is the first of three mainstem fish migration barriers that fragment mainstem habitat in the Lower-Middle Weber River. The actions taken at the mouth of Weber Canyon were intended to improve the robustness of the native fish populations by restoring habitat connectivity. Other conservation actions aimed at restoring habitat connectivity throughout this reach of the Weber River mainstem and high priority tributaries are complimentary to this proposal to secure critical floodplain habitat. Protecting the four parcels proposed in this project, would allow watershed partners to restore habitat quality and diversity in a very highly degraded reach. The UDWR, TU, and Weber Pathways have also been involved in floodplain restoration actions further downstream in an area where similar challenges occurred. Providing pathway access to the river has helped to formalize recreational use of the river which is under heavy pressure from dispersed recreation. A pathway will ensure that floodplain values, bank stability and access can all be preserved.

7. Describe any additional social benefits of implementing this project:

There are major social benefits from this project. First, by securing this land, it would provide recreational access to approximately one mile of the Weber River, including a parcel immediately downstream already owned by Weber Pathways, which had not been accessible in the past. The long term goals of this project, which include floodplain restoration and major riparian area revegetation, would seek to benefit recreational opportunities by establishing a permanent pedestrian pathway on the margins of the floodplain as well as improving angling opportunities. The Ogden River serves as a great example of how the community has been able to rally around a degraded river and transform it into a community amenity. This was particularly the case after restoration had been completed. Catalyzed by restoration, the grassroots community has rallied around the Ogden River, but undertaking various community events centered on the river. We anticipate that, with improved accessibility and restoration, the public stewardship of this reach of river will improve. Less obvious social benefits include improved water quality through floodplain sediment retention and colder summer stream temperatures. Although not easy to measure these factors contribute to our improved quality of life.

8. Project plans and details, including rights to work on specified piece of land:

Project plans are currently very preliminary. We have begun initial discussions with the landowners. Our current plan is to develop an acquisition agreement in which we pay market value for the land. A price of \$3,000 per acre, which is the value currently assessed by Weber County for taxation purposes, will be offered to the landowners.

9. Describe your experience in implementing projects of similar scope and magnitude:

In 1994 TU established an innovative model—the Home Rivers Initiative (HRI)—for conservation of streams and fish. HRI project managers are hired from within local communities to work with and coordinate efforts among resource agencies, scientists, landowners and local partner organizations to restore coldwater fish habitat and populations at the watershed scale. Each project is a collaborative multi-year effort that combines applied scientific and economic research, community outreach, on-the-ground restoration, and the development of long-term conservation and management strategies and tools. Project managers implement restoration and conservation projects in high priority watersheds, and work to build community support and stewardship to carry them forward and sustain the conservation gains into the future. To date we have implemented 25 HRI projects in over a dozen states. Those projects have reconnected and/or restored hundreds of miles habitat and benefitted fish populations, anglers, and local communities.

TU has approximately 1,500 volunteers and four full-time staff in the State of Utah. Our mission is to protect and restore coldwater fisheries and their habitats in Utah and across the West. Consistent with that mission, we strongly support and participate in efforts that improve water quality and aquatic habitat. We have extensive experience working collaboratively with water users, federal and state biologists, and other non-governmental organizations in restoration across Utah with projects that improve water delivery systems while simultaneously improving habitat quality and connectivity ensuring the population resiliency of coldwater fish. Local examples of those projects include:

- Lower Weber River Diversion Modernization – Fish passage and screening on a mainstem irrigation diversion near the mouth of Weber Canyon. Project partners, including TU, provided funding support to the water users to help them rebuild their diversion structure while incorporating critical fish passage and screening components into the system.
- South Fork Chalk Creek Reconnection – TU worked with a broad partnership to develop an irrigation diversion upgrade project near the mouth of the South Fork of Chalk Creek near Coalville, UT. In this case we managed the budgets and construction of diversion structure removal, and the construction of pivots with a screened intake structure.
- Fish Creek Reconnection – Also in the Chalk Creek watershed, TU staff worked with private landowners to remove a culvert, reconstruct the stream channel and hillslopes to restore fish passage and reduce sedimentation into the Chalk Creek watershed.

Weber Pathways is a locally-based nonprofit in the Ogden area. Through partnerships Weber Pathways has been instrumental in constructing and maintaining over 10 miles of pathway along the Ogden and Weber Rivers including two bridges. Weber Pathways has also secured several land parcels adjacent to the Weber River in this reach.

10. Describe how ongoing maintenance of the project will be funded and carried out:

The overall goal of this project is to secure the habitat needed for the development of riparian restoration actions and a pathway. The idea behind floodplain management is that we allow the natural processes to shape the habitats after we develop a template through restoration actions. The only maintenance burden we foresee with riparian restoration is weed and riparian vegetation management. The project partners have had good success in working with grassroots members (both TU and WP members) to accomplish weed management and revegetation goals. Weber Pathways typically oversees pathway installation and enters into maintenance agreements with the appropriate local government agency. In this case, it would likely be South Weber City.

11. List consultants or agency partners that have participated in project development (below):

Utah Division of Wildlife Resources	515 E 5300 S, Ogden, UT	801-643-4953
<u>Ben Nadolski</u>	_____	_____
Name/Company	Address	Phone
<u>Weber Pathways – Mark Benigni</u>	PO Box 972, Ogden, UT 84402	(801) 393-2304
<u>Name/Company</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone</u>

Signature  Date 5/5/2014
 Applicant

Signature _____ Date _____
 Co-Applicant (if applicable)