

Utah Lake has a true friend - 20-member panel intent on improving the area By **Catherine Smith** - Deseret Morning News - *Published: November 26, 2007*

PROVO — Carp and a causeway — Utah Lake-related topics that have lately gained attention — only touch the tip of what the Utah Lake Commission hopes to affect.

To be sure, the commission's charge is as large as the lake itself.

The commission began as a study group when several mayors decided some of the issues surrounding the lake — the largest freshwater lake in Utah — needed to be addressed. The Utah County Council of Governments voted to form the Utah Lake Study Committee in 2004, which was approved by Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. as the Utah Lake Commission in March 2007.

The commission is made up of 14 municipalities, three state agencies, Utah County and the Central Utah Water Conservancy District. It has 20 members and meets monthly to discuss issues regarding the lake.

Although still in its infancy, the commission's office runs with two full-time employees, and the commission already serves as a consultant and tool for agencies, legislators and others to receive information and guidance concerning the lake.

"We see ourselves as a coordination center," said Reed Price, executive director of the Utah Lake Commission. "(There are) people who have these different ideas, and they may need to talk to several agencies in order to get approval, and we can get them right in touch with the people they need to speak with."

Consider some of the issues facing the commission: The problem of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs in the lake; the infestation of invasive animal and plant species, such as carp and phragmites; encroaching development, transportation and water quality.

The commission holds no authority to approve or deny any projects, but it is a source of information for those that do hold the authority, Price said.

Price also said the commission helps other agencies. For example, the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands could seek advice on requests for transportation-system permits on areas near the lake. The commission also will work with the state Department of Health on unhealthy PCB levels found in carp and channel catfish.

Commission members met with Christina McNaughton, health hazard assessment manager and toxicologist with the Department of Health, in October to understand more about the warnings against PCBs and how they affect Utah Lake.

Helping to raise funds and find organizations or grants that could pay for studies into lake issues is one way the commission will help agencies and try to conserve the lake.

Last week, the commission approved a resolution to support any appropriation of funds from the government for studies regarding Utah Lake.

Rep. Kenneth Sumsion, R-American Fork, wants funds from the Legislature for a study to look at a possible causeway through Utah Lake.

"A lot of people see (the lake) as an eyesore, but it truly is a gem ... one of our goals and objectives is to convince the public that it is such," he said.

A master plan is under way and is expected to be done by January 2009.