

Bill: 1st substitute HB 154 – Water Loss Study Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Owens

Floor Sponsor:

UASD Position: Support

This Bill directs the Division of Water Resources (division) to study reported data regarding water loss.

Discussion: The sponsor explained that the Bill focuses on addressing water loss within delivery systems. The Acting Director of the Division of Water Resources, Nathan Lunstad, discussed current water losses caused by leaking pipes, unmetered system maintenance, and faulty overflow valves, noting that the average loss rate in the United States is approximately 16%. The Bill would allow the Division to conduct a holistic assessment of water systems without imposing costs or mandating specific fixes. Rather, it allows the Division to identify where improvements may be needed or where losses are acceptable.

Representative Watkins asked whether existing legislation already addressed this issue, and Mr. Lunstad responded that there had been three prior attempts to create legislation that imposed requirements and penalties on water systems. This Bill does not include penalties. He clarified that inspections would rely on source data and end-meter tracking to measure losses. The Utah Homebuilders Association spoke in support of the Bill. The Committee discussed adding a protective amendment to prevent undue oversight by the Division of Water Resources.

Yeas: 12

Nays: 0

N/V: 2

Outcome: 1st substitute HB 154 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: 1st substitute HB 247 – Great Salt Lake Funding Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Ward

Floor Sponsor:

UASD Position: Track

This Bill addresses funding of activities that benefit the Great Salt Lake.

Discussion: Representative Ward explained that currently the brine shrimp tax is deposited into the Protected Species Account. Because new sources of income from taxes placed on all renewable energy will begin to be deposited into that Account this year, this Bill directs revenue generated by the brine shrimp tax to be deposited into the Sovereign Lands Management Account instead of the Species Protection Account. This change would allow funds to be used

for the purchase of leased water rights to be directed into the Great Salt Lake, with particular attention to maintaining the brine shrimp population.

The 1st substitute, which was adopted by the Committee, delays the implementation date until July 1, 2027 rather than July 1, 2026. The sponsor stated that this change was made to address concerns from the Mining Association. With the passage of the federal “Big Beautiful Bill”, the brine shrimp industry is concerned that there may not be sufficient revenue generated from taxing solar farms to maintain funding for the Species Protection Account at current levels. The delayed implementation date allows time to ensure that the Protected Species Account is adequately funded before redirecting the brine shrimp tax revenue to the Sovereign Lands Management Account.

Representative Shipp questioned whether the Bill should instead be delayed until next year rather than including a delayed effective date. Representative Ward responded that it makes sense for the brine shrimp tax revenue to be used in a manner that protects the Great Salt Lake and, in turn, protects the brine shrimp industry. The Brine Shrimp Industry and the Youth Coalition for the Great Salt Lake spoke in support of the Bill.

Yeas: 13

Nays: 0

N/V: 1

Outcome: 1st substitute HB 247 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: 1st substitute HB 410 – Water Leasing Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Koford

Floor Sponsor:

UASD Position: Support

This Bill addresses leasing of water.

Discussion: The sponsor explained that HB 410 creates a statewide water program to lease primarily agricultural water for the benefit of the Great Salt Lake. The Bill establishes the Salt Lake Preservation Fund, provides agricultural safeguards, and streamlines the leasing process statewide. It requires a change application and creates a fixed-time change application process to provide additional flexibility. The Bill also requires measurement and reporting to ensure that leased agriculture water is being delivered to the Lake. In addition, the Bill includes a sunset date of 2030 to allow for evaluation of the program’s effectiveness.

The Deputy Director of the Great Salt Lake Commission noted that the Bill allows agriculture producers to make year-to-year decisions in advance. This enables them to consider weather conditions when determining whether to lease their water, with two out of every five years reserved as sideboards to ensure continued agricultural use. The 1st substitute, which was adopted by the Committee, includes minor changes such as using the cost of alfalfa to determine the price for leased water. Trout Unlimited, the Utah Farm Bureau, and the Utah Department of

Agriculture and Food spoke in support of the Bill, and several members of the public also spoke in support.

Yeas: 13

Nays: 0

N/V: 1

Outcome: 1st substitute HB 410 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: SB 46 – Water Wise Landscaping Amendments

Sponsor: Senator Stratton

Floor Sponsor: Representative Snider

UASD Position: Track

This Bill addresses water wise landscaping requirements for public facilities.

Discussion: Senator Stratton explained that the Bill creates new requirements for waterwise landscaping on all government facilities. It is intended to have the state serve as a model example for best practices in the use of waterwise landscaping. Representative Albrecht questioned whether the Bill would apply to all government facilities, and it was clarified that it applies only to state-owned facilities. Representative Shipp questioned whether the provisions would apply to new or existing buildings. These requirements would apply to any new or reconstructed state government facility that does not include functional turf built after May 6, 2026.

Yeas: 12

Nays: 0

N/V: 2

Outcome: SB 46 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.
