

Bill: 2nd substitute HB 187 – Water Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Jack

Floor Sponsor: Senator Ipson

UASD Position: Support

This Bill addresses water in the lower basin as defined by the Colorado River Compact.

Discussion: The sponsor, accompanied by Zach Renstrom of the Washington County Water Conservancy District ("WCWCD"), presented the Bill and explained that WCWCD obtains its water supply from the Virgin River as part of the Lower Colorado Basin system. The sponsor stated that the Bill is intended to protect Utah's water rights from being lost downstream by allowing eligible water districts to secure long-term water rights and ensure continued beneficial use of allocated water. Mr. Renstrom added that the Bill provides water districts within the Lower Colorado Basin with additional authority to manage and use their water resources.

The Bill updates several aspects of state water law with a focus on the management and conservation of water rights in Utah's lower basin, as defined by the Colorado River Compact. The Bill clarifies procedures related to water rights use, transfer, and forfeiture, particularly for lower basin rights. It also restricts certain instream flow change applications in that area to better reflect hydrological and legal conditions. In addition, the Bill refines definitions and regulatory processes governing how water rights may be altered or conserved, with the goal of streamlining and modernizing water administration. The Bill clarifies how water users, including water conservancy districts, may implement instream flow changes and transfer water rights, and it provides clearer statutory guidance within the state water code. Overall, the legislation is intended to improve clarity, consistency, and governance of water rights in key river basins throughout Utah.

Yeas: 4

Nays: 0

N/V: 3

Outcome: 2nd substitute HB 187 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.
