

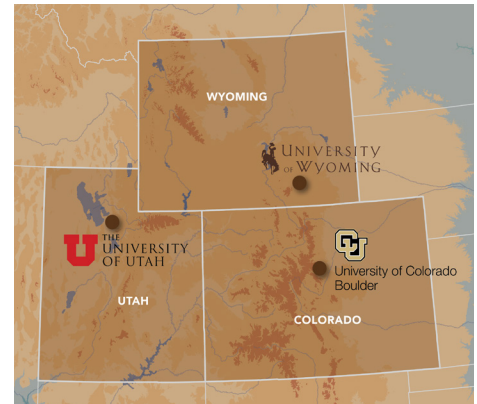


WESTERN WATER ASSESSMENT

A NOAA RISA TEAM

PREPARING FOR HAZARDS IN UTAH

Western Water Assessment (WWA) is an applied research program that works directly with communities, water managers, hazard risk planners, and other partners in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming. WWA helps them make the best use of science to build resilience and manage risks from weather and hazards like wildfire and smoke, flooding, drought, and extreme heat. WWA's team includes faculty, researchers, and students with expertise across the physical and social sciences—hydrology, geography, atmospheric science, policy, and law—at the University of Colorado Boulder, University of Utah, and University of Wyoming.



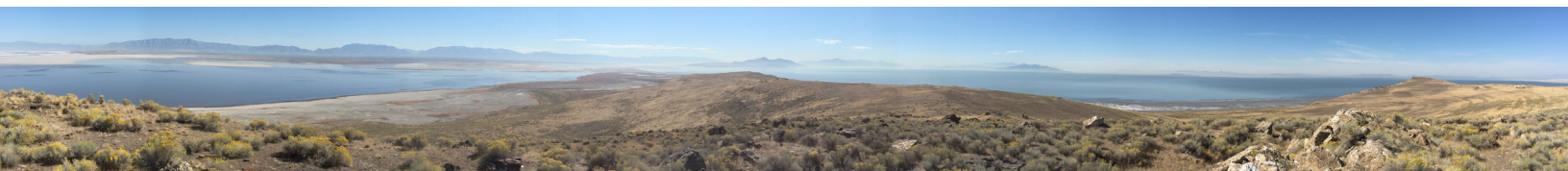
What Is the Value of WWA in Utah?

Innovative Water Planning in Salt Lake City

WWA has worked with the **Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities (SLCDPU)** for over 15 years, providing data and information as they navigate growing water scarcity while managing the water supply for over 360,000 people. SLCDPU managers face significant uncertainty in seasonal planning, as conventional tools are less predictive in Utah. WWA researchers identified a new way to predict seasonal water supply and created an experimental forecast tool in partnership with SLCDPU staff. The tool fills a critical gap between available science and actionable guidance, and SLCDPU is using it to inform decisions.

Testing Drought Preparedness in Utah

The **Utah Division of Water Resources (DWR)** sought out WWA for help in **planning for drought response and mitigation**. WWA staff assembled a team with experts at the National Drought Mitigation Center to plan and convene a drought tabletop exercise for DWR that tests the current drought response plan under different drought scenarios. The team helped state drought planners explore multiple drought scenarios and **identified how they could best respond to each**. The exercise was particularly timely, as the state is currently navigating **extreme drought conditions after a record-low snowpack season**.



Local Wildfire Risk and Resilience

Mountain communities across Utah are increasingly worried about the **threat of wildfire**. In 2025, wildfires burned 181,332 acres across the state, with costs associated with fighting the fires **exceeding \$189 million**. WWA is working with **Park City** officials to better understand wildfire risk within city-owned forested land, and with **Summit County** officials to explore the connected impacts of wildfire and bad air quality on community health. Through both efforts, we are empowering communities to **build homegrown resilience to wildfire**.

Community Hazard Preparedness

WWA supports Utah communities with **planning for extreme weather and natural hazards**. We collaborated with local, state, and federal partners to develop an online **Utah Hazard Planning Tool** that connects hazard planners with the latest high-quality data about hazard incidence and impacts. We also convened and led a series of community hazard workshops in **Springdale** and **Moab**. At the workshops, WWA staff provided **custom, local-scale information** about hazard risk, and municipal staff and community leaders **identified specific actions** they could take to prepare for and respond to drought and flooding.

What Services Does WWA Provide?

The WWA team works with communities, state agencies, resource managers, and others to help them identify and understand risks and build resilience to key hazards like drought, wildfire, flooding, and extreme heat. We do this by building trusted relationships with our partners so that we understand their needs and the decisions they are navigating. We then provide support that is tailored to meet those needs, including:



Accessing and Using Information



Conducting New Analysis or Research



Connecting and Convening



Training and Capacity Building

Who Does WWA Work with in Utah?

Colorado Basin River Forecast Center
Five Counties Association of County Governments
Moab, UT
NOAA National Weather Service
Park City, UT
Provo, UT
Salt Lake City and County, UT
Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities
Springdale, UT
Summit County, UT
US Forest Service
Utah Division of Emergency Management
Utah Division of Water Resources
Utah Governor's Office
Wasatch County, UT
Weber Basin Water Conservancy District

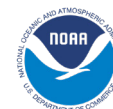


"The bottom line for our community is that, Western Water Assessment, for many many years, has provided expertise, research capacity, and modeling capacity that help water managers and municipal practitioners like me to plan for uncertainties."

- Laura Briefer, Director of Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities

Leveraging the U.S. Investment in Science for Decision-Makers

WWA is one of several regionally-based teams across America in the NOAA Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments (RISA) network. For a modest investment, RISA teams partner directly with communities and resource managers to help them build resilience to hazards like floods, wildfires, and droughts. RISA teams have developed trusted relationships with communities and decision-makers across the country over the last 30 years. The program has garnered bipartisan support from lawmakers. The RISA model is unique across the federal government and used as an example of how to produce usable science with partners. The RISA program is housed within the NOAA Climate Program Office and is funded under the Regional Climate Data and Information budget line.



RISA
Regional Integrated Sciences
and Assessments

WWA Director

Ben Livneh, ben.livneh@colorado.edu

Managing Director

Benét Duncan, benet.duncan@colorado.edu

More Information: wwa.colorado.edu



University of Colorado **Boulder**

