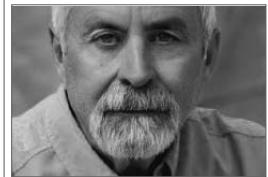


Does southern Utah need the Lake Powell Pipeline?

The Lake Powell Pipeline (LPP) proposal arose from a belief that Utah has an unused share of the Colorado River and a fear of water shortages stifling Washington County's rapid population growth. Although many leaders across the state say southern Utah needs the LPP, this statement is not based on facts. Decisions about the LPP should be driven by a strategic plan, based on verified facts rather than beliefs and fears, answering the following questions in sequence:

» Can the Colorado River support the LPP? Answering "yes" assumes Utah is either entitled to more Colorado River water or that Utahns with senior water rights will share their water. These assumptions are unsupported by facts about river flows and Utah's use. Utah may already be using more than its share of the river. The river cannot support even its current uses. We had better not need water that doesn't exist.

» The next question: Is the LPP affordable? The basis for the estimated \$1.5 billion cost is undisclosed and may be significantly under-estimated. The state will determine its financing ability, but not affordability. LPP users would



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eventually pay for it through increased property taxes, connection fees and/or usage fees. There is no plan to understand the impact of these increases. Payment should be based primarily on usage fees, to encourage wise use. Utah is financially challenged to maintain even existing water infrastructure. We'd better not need water that isn't affordable.

» If the prior questions are answered "yes", then we can ask: Is the LPP needed? Washington County's projected 2065 population is 510,000 (triple the current population). If that really happens, the current non-agricultural water use of 300 gallons per person per day must drop to 180 for the local supply to support it. Studies indicate that comparable vibrant, growing, attractive Southwest communities use that amount now. With modest investments in

high-yield, low-cost conservation and the trend to smaller yards and efficient homes, Washington County should easily get there by 2065. An honest evaluation of conservation costs and yields, and comparisons with other communities, is required. We should be good stewards of the water we have before wanting more.

» Finally, assuming we get to this question, when could it make sense to build the LPP? Answer: as late as possible. Construction costs may increase with time, but the largest cost of building the LPP, by far, is interest on the loan. Waiting would allow the larger population to pay the debt quicker, incurring less interest (and operations/maintenance) costs. Conservation would prove itself, and answers to the prior questions will be clearer.

Responsible leaders would implement strategic planning for our water: engaging stakeholders in transparent processes, defining goals and the strategies to achieve them, finding unbiased answers to drive decision-making. Many of our leaders don't seem to support this approach. Instead, they claim that without the LPP, family members will

be forced to move away, the landscape will be barren, and the economy will fail. They claim that the Colorado River is one of the safest water sources, that water is already being used wisely, and that more conservation would cost too much. These claims meet the definition of propaganda: "information that is not objective, used primarily to influence an audience, presenting facts selectively, using loaded language to produce an emotional rather than a rational response." This is not leadership.

Our water is a complex, expensive resource to manage, with severe consequences for mis-management. Let's collectively engage in honest, transparent strategic planning for our water, basing our decisions on verified facts and data, rather than rushing into irresponsible risks. Responsible leadership would take this path.

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