

Searching For

# Best Management Practices Workshop

*Report & Analysis*



**JORDAN RIVER**  
OUR RIVER - OUR FUTURE

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

The Jordan River Commission (JRC), a partnership of local government officials and community leaders, is leading an effort to work with stakeholders along the Jordan River corridor to identify and implement a toolbox of technically-sound best management practices (BMPs). As an initial step in developing the BMPs, the JRC held a stakeholder workshop to receive input that will shape and guide the future of the corridor. Workshop attendees provided input on the environmental, recreational, economic, and cultural significance of the corridor and its impact on the communities through which it flows. The workshop served as the first step in developing technically sound BMPs that cities and counties along the corridor can use as guidelines to develop their own policies and ordinances.

The workshop was held on August 7, 2012, from 8 am to 11 am at the Utah Cultural Celebration Center in West Valley City. An invitation list was developed that included JRC Steering Committee Members, JRC Technical Advisory Committee, city and county officials, and major land owners. A save-the-date email letter was sent out in mid-July, an invitation was also mailed, follow up emails were sent and personal phone calls made. 72 individuals attended, consisting mostly of mayors, city council representatives, planners, and public works representatives. The notification strategy was very effective resulting in representatives from every stakeholder group attending (Bluffdale, Cottonwood Heights, Draper, Lehi, Midvale, Murray, North Salt Lake, Riverton, Saratoga Springs, South Jordan, Salt Lake City, Sandy, South Salt Lake, Taylorsville, West Jordan, West Valley City, Davis County, Salt Lake County, and Utah County). Participants stayed the entire workshop time. Additionally, a news release was drafted and distributed to local print and broadcast media.

## WORKSHOP FORMAT

The project team designed the workshop to accomplish four goals: (1) Ensure stakeholders understand and feel part of the process (2) Listen to, document, and value input from stakeholders (3) Obtain input on categories to be included for the BMPs and (4) Secure support for the process and criteria to select final BMPs.

As attendees arrived in the foyer they were asked to sign in, given a name tag, provided breakfast and had the opportunity to view the Reawakened Beauty photo exhibit. The room was arranged with round tables and each table setting included a book titled *Reawakened Beauty: The Past, Present & Future of the Jordan River* and a Jordan River Parkway trail map.

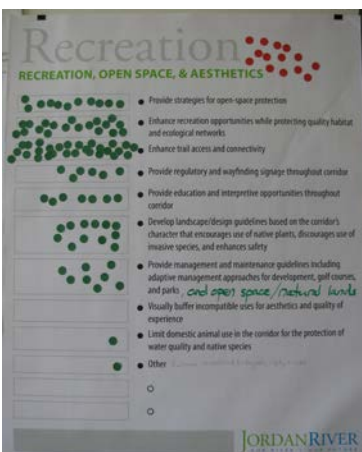


*The notification strategy was effective resulting in a representative from every city and county along the river corridor attending.*





*To engage everyone the project team relied on innovative and participatory tactics to obtain meaningful input in a targeted manner.*



The workshop began with a welcome by Laura Hanson, Executive Director of the Jordan River Commission. After the welcome attendees watched a video about the significance and value of the river designed to inspire attendees and set the stage for the workshop. Following the video, Nancy Monteith, EPG Project Manager, gave an overview of the workshop and keynote speakers Justin Anderson and Ben Nadolski presented a local case study about the Ogden River Restoration Project and the benefits they have seen from it. After the keynote speech Nancy Monteith presented key findings from preliminary Jordan River one-on-one research where she emphasized the preliminary research that helped shape the format of this workshop and discussion topics. After Nancy presented her key findings, attendees were asked to participate in a group exercise where they used red and green dots to rank five categories (community, habitat, land use, recreation, and stormwater) and elements within each category.

## GROUP EXERCISE KEY FINDINGS

Since the Jordan River corridor extends for approximately 50 miles, from Utah Lake to the Great Salt Lake, and flows through three counties and 15 cities, the project team relied on innovative and participatory tactics to obtain meaningful input in a targeted manner. To prepare individuals for their working group discussions, the project team conducted a group exercise to identify top priorities among the five identified categories (community, habitat, land use, recreation, and stormwater). At the front of the room there was a large poster titled “Guiding Principles: Blueprint Jordan River” with ten statements that encapsulate the Blueprint Jordan Vision. Additionally, five large posters were displayed for each category with bulleted elements pertaining to that category. Each participant received one red sticker and 10 green stickers and were asked to place their red sticker on their top priority category - and their green stickers on their top two elements in each category. Following are highlights of how stakeholders prioritized the five categories and the elements within each category.

**Recreation:** This category ranked highest in importance among stakeholders; receiving 14 red dots. Stakeholders identified enhancing trail access and connectivity, enhancing recreational opportunities while protecting quality habitat and ecological networks, and developing landscape/design guidelines based on the corridor’s character that encourages use of native plants, discourages use of invasive species, and enhances safety as their top three elements. Stakeholders also identified enhancing recreational boating uses/safety access as another element in this category.

**Stormwater:** Stakeholders ranked this category second in importance and gave it 13 red dots. Within this category, stakeholders ranked vegetated swales and rain gardens, wetland restoration/enhancement; management of illicit discharges (e.g., dumping, trash and debris, and septic system failures); and low impact development, such as pervious pavements, minimal impervious areas/micro detention (i.e., green infrastructure) as their top three elements.



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**Community:** Participants ranked this category third in importance giving it a total of 10 red dots. Within this category, participants expressed that increasing usage of the corridor, promoting a positive image, and increasing knowledge and developing educational opportunities were top priorities. Participants also identified economic development as another element in this category.

**Land Use:** Participants ranked this category fourth in importance and gave it eight red dots. Within this category, participants ranked land use to include: restricting/limiting certain land uses and encouraging river sensitive land uses, providing river setback/buffer, and providing river access as their top three elements. Participants also identified food production and subdivision regulations as other elements in this category.

**Habitat:** This category ranked lowest in importance among stakeholders and received six red dots. Stakeholders identified improving natural flow and water quality and reducing channelization; improving bank stability, erosion control, through the use of live stakes and revegetation of bank zones; and increasing potential habitat area by improving connectivity using native plant species between the river corridor and adjacent parks and open spaces as their top three elements.

**Additional Categories:** Participants looked outside the box in the group exercise and identified the following additional categories: funding (11 green dots), public water safety development (three green dots), water conservation (2 green dots), vandalism patrol, and active transportation (rollers skates/bikes/pedestrian) to facilitate flow to public transit options.

After completing the group exercise, attendees self-selected into one of five working group sessions to provide detailed input. In each working group there was a facilitator to lead the discussion and a scribe to capture comments on a flip chart. Having attendees self-select into working groups worked well with all groups being similar in size and individuals selecting the group in their area of expertise or interest. Following the working group sessions, the facilitator from each group reported key findings to the entire group. The workshop concluded with Laura Hanson thanking everyone for attending and mentioning this is one step in the project outreach process and there will be additional opportunities for stakeholder input, in the coming year.

## WORKING GROUPS KEY FINDINGS

To obtain the most meaningful input from participants, the project team asked individuals to select one of the five working groups where facilitators and scribes probed for further information and details. Project team members worked diligently to solicit meaningful and specific feedback about the corridor from attendees in a welcoming atmosphere. The role of project team members



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was to remind everyone that the river intricately connects all stakeholders and encourage them to look at the whole system using long term thinking. The project team also reminded attendees to provide specific comments and recommendations that will assist them in further public involvement efforts and in developing BMPs. Although the project team allocated 40 minutes for the breakout session, the time went by quickly and many groups still wanted to continue their discussions when it was announced that it was time to wrap up the discussions. Following are key findings from the working groups.

**Community:** Participants stated the Jordan River needs to be promoted as a community asset and have a positive image. They felt this could be accomplished by developing communications tools and educational opportunities to increase use by people and respecting that use means different things to different people. They expressed the need to develop a consistent brand for the river that includes messaging, but that the messaging needs to be adaptable for each unique community; develop consistent signage along the corridor; develop and promote recreational opportunities; develop signature river events (lake to lake race); create exhibits and interactive stations, and increase positive media stories. Members stated that the river is an important economic driver for many communities, but it happens in different ways and the individual cities should decide their approach. It was also mentioned that the corridor needs to be community centric and not development centric.

**Habitat:** Members of this group discussed best management practices as they relate to habitat, environment, and connectivity. Group members agreed that a meandering river and natural flow is more important than improving bank stability and erosion control. Maintaining habitat diversity and complexity is also a priority for stakeholders in this group while cutting maintenance costs. One group member stressed the importance of minimizing the use of pesticides by establishing a thoughtful plan for the timing of planting, which can have a positive effect on reducing invasive plants and the use of pesticides. It was noted that over the past three years many native plants have been planted and this has helped with weed control and bank stabilization. Additionally, connectivity and the clustering of development related to the built and natural environment was noted as a concern. A group member also noted that visual components are important and can be an enhancement for residents and commercial/industrial developments.

**Land Use:** Discussion among stakeholders in this group focused on desirable land uses as well as preserving open space and maintaining access. Individuals noted industrial uses near the river corridor should be avoided and desirable land uses include clustered single family dwellings as well as parks, recreation and open space. A theme that emerged from this group was that if substantial land areas need to be preserved, then they may need to be purchased. It was also noted that incentives could be provided to purchase land such as transfer of development rights. Group members also stated that if we want people to

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learn more about the river and engage with it, they need to be able to get closer to it. Obstacles, such as willows and other plants and trees, are impacting the view of the river in certain places preventing individuals from getting close to it.

**Recreation:** In the recreation group participants stated recreation opportunities along the corridor need to be enhanced while protecting quality habitat and ecological networks. However, it was also noted protecting the health of the corridor must be the highest priority because if the health of the corridor is lost then the corridor is lost. Group members suggested funding sources need to be established to acquire open space and to maintain the corridor. Enhancing trail access and connectivity was also a top priority for members of the group. Stakeholders specifically noted closing gaps along the corridor and connecting the communities to the Jordan River are important. Finally, it was noted there should be unifying wayfinding signage, to establish character throughout the corridor, and educational opportunities so individuals can better understand the value of the corridor.

**Stormwater:** Members of the stormwater group identified turbidity, debris, and hydrocarbons as stormwater issues important to the Jordan River. It was also noted among group members there needs to be a seasonal approach to BMPs and funding for BMP implementation, maintenance, and inspections is a challenge. Participants identified effective BMPs, beneficial to the Jordan River, they are already using, such as street sweeping and collection of household hazardous waste. Group members also stated canals are important for stormwater management in high and low flows. Individuals also stressed the importance of integrating BMPs within all five working groups.

## MEDIA COVERAGE

As a result of promoting the workshop through the local media, two stories aired. The Fox 13 story noted communities are working together to come up with effective strategies to manage the river so everyone benefits and that the hope is to develop flexible policies that are consistent to manage and improve the river corridor. The KCPW story emphasized the partnership is important, because such a large portion of the state has a stake in the future of the Jordan River, by using a quote from Laura Hanson.

## SUMMARY

The workshop proved very valuable in engaging stakeholders in a transparent process that provided opportunities to engage in open and honest discussions with project team members regarding the future of the Jordan River. Since the workshop, team members have received positive feedback on the stakeholder engagement process from entities, such as West Valley City. We look forward to continuing our dialogue with stakeholders in a variety of formats over the next several months.