

Parks, Natural Lands, Urban Forestry, & Trails NEWSLETTER

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Funding Recreation Opportunities Along the Jordan River Parkway

Elliott Mott could be considered an Ambassador of the Jordan River. Mott, a resident of Salt Lake County, and the chair of Salt Lake City's Parks, Natural Lands, Trails & Urban Forestry Advisory Board, has hosted more than 75 group kayak floats along various sections of the Jordan River through the Meetup group Utah Outdoors. Asked if he had a favorite section, Mott replied "Yes, but it's the entire river through Salt Lake City." Specifically, Mott says his favorite stretch of the Jordan River begins at 1700 South and ends at Center Street in North Salt Lake, a kayak trip that is 10 miles and takes about three hours to complete.

This biggest problem with paddling the Jordan River, Mott says, is the difficulty of finding either natural or man-made put-ins or take-outs for his boat, which is critical to an enjoyable recreation experience. Mott recently published a Jordan River Water Trail guidebook which provides detailed instructions for locating sparse river access points. However, Mott continues to be an outspoken advocate for the need for additional, formal access points along the Jordan River.

In 2017, Salt Lake City's Trails & Natural Lands Division applied for a grant from the Utah Governor's Office of Outdoor Recreation. Staff members set a goal to raise \$114,000 required to facilitate the construction of new boat ramps at two key locations along the

Jordan River in Salt Lake City. This would create a 7-mile "water trail" for canoes and kayaks, floating south to north through the city's west side.

Lewis Kogan, Director of Salt Lake City's Trails & Natural Lands Division, says that most people make incorrect assumptions about the Jordan River. "Most people, if they even know about the Jordan River, assume that it's not a place worth going. But anyone who's spent an hour in a canoe on the river knows differently. We believe that helping open people's eyes to the natural beauty and recreational potential of the river is going to be transformational. People will start to realize, not only do we live within minutes of the mountains, but we also have this great flatwater river that you can paddle through the city."

Mott says that if the City were able to obtain funding to create developed access points through Salt Lake City it would make the experience of kayaking the river "safer, more enjoyable, facilitate longer paddles, and encourage more boaters to navigate the Jordan River through town." He added that bringing more recreational users to the trail will also increase safety and promote active healthy lifestyles.

Kogan says grants like the one the Division applied for from the Office of Outdoor Recreation are critical for his Division. "We have a very small annual budget," he says, "but we have an ambitious vision. And funding decision-

makers are attracted to that." In the last two years alone, Kogan notes that his Division has more than doubled its budget for trail improvements and natural lands restoration by pursuing grants, donations, and contributions from other discretionary funding sources. "Applying for funding takes a tremendous amount of time, effort and coordination," says Kogan, "but it allows us to build trails and protect open space much faster than if we simply relied on our annual budgetary allocation from the City."

With support from Elliott Mott, as well as the Jordan River Commission, the Poplar Grove Community Council, and the National Ability Center, the Trails & Natural Lands Division was successful, and the Governor's Office decided to award full funding to allow the project to proceed. Says Tom Adams, Director of the Governor's Office of Outdoor Recreation, "The primary objective of our office is to increase the position of Utah as the nation's premier place for outdoor recreation. We saw an opportunity in Salt Lake City's proposal to take a under-appreciated resource and turn it into an incredibly accessible destination for flatwater paddling right here in Utah's capital city."

The Trails & Natural Lands Division is currently working on boat ramp designs and permitting and plans to cut the ribbon on the new Jordan River water trail access points in mid-2020.

Warm Springs Park: Restroom Rebuild

In 2019 Warm Springs Park will get a new restroom to replace the existing dilapidated facility located in the south west corner of the Park. New restrooms are one of the most frequently requested items by residents of Salt Lake City and are a key amenity in the City's community and regional parks. Restroom access affects everyone: people with disabilities, parents with small children, and those with non-conforming gender identity. With this design, Public lands incorporated best practices for universal access, principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) and historic preservation strategies to compliment the Wasatch Plunge Building that is on the Local and National Historic Landmark site.

Design strategies that foster universal access include three individual gender neutral stalls and one gender neutral ADA stall. This not only provides better access for diverse populations it increases access when there is more demand for female or male league games. Hand washing stations, a water fountain, and a dog fountain on the outside of the building will increase access for the public.

Maintaining sightlines to and around the building, directing pathways to the building entrances and creating a beautiful structure that the community is proud of are all important components of increasing use and community pride that also reduces criminal activity and are best practices of CPTED.

The new restroom building was designed to complement the historic Warm Springs Plunge building by matching colors, roof lines and materials. Incorporating these details are meant to compliment, rather than detract from, the Wasatch Plunge building. Historic Landmarks are a key characteristic and component of neighborhood identity.

The restroom is just the first phase of improvements that are planned for Warm Springs Park over the next five years. Public Lands has submitted a 2019-2020 CIP application to improve the multi-use field so that it can be regularly scheduled for league play. The application also includes a request for funding to add a small off-leash area for neighborhood use.

For more information on the restroom and future park improvements call (801) 972-7800 or e-mail parks@slcgov.com



Photo of Warm Springs Park Landscape

RAC: Field Protection Blankets

In September 2018, the Salt Lake City Regional Athletic Complex purchased five field blankets. The blankets are intended to support a healthy field during cold winter months, from December – February. The complex has 16 fields so the blankets have been strategically placed on fields two – six. These fields have been equipped with lighting which increases the number of reservations and evening playing hours they receive during the Complex's open season. In turn, these fields necessarily require additional time to re-establish during winter and early spring months. The blankets provide a head start to this process and ensure ready-to-play fields when the Complex opens. They will also prevent early damage to the turf after months of dormancy. Serving multiple purposes, they act as protective barrier from harsh weather such as low temperatures and high winds and help sustain the grass by allowing sun, air, and moisture to penetrate the cover. The Regional Athletic Complex was excited to lay the blankets this month to support the integrity of the turf, which is essential to operating a state of the art facility come playing season.

Beneath the Surface: How Canopy Staking Impacts City Parks

Salt Lake City parks are a prime location for hosting community events. In fact, in 2018 there were nearly 160 events held in City parks. Liberty Park and Memory Grove Park are among the most popular locations for special events as most people are drawn to the attractive landscape, large trees, and wide-open spaces. After each event, parks' staff strive to ensure the landscape returns to the same visually pleasing and healthy condition. However, as the City's population and demand for event space increases so do the high demands on green infrastructure.



Image shows a pile of stakes commonly used to secure canopies and tents. Photo Credit: Image obtained from bigtentrentals.com on December 17, 2018

The ability to provide sufficient irrigation (sprinkler system watering) to nourish the turf and trees is a primary concern after a park event. Unfortunately, as the frequency of events has increased so has the likelihood of damaging critical park irrigation infrastructure. Salt Lake City plumbers and irrigation technicians have found that event canopy staking can be attributed to many of these issues. Staking is when a tent or canopy is secured into the ground at each corner with metal spikes up to 2 ½ feet long to add support to the structure. Canopy tents are popular during events because they provide a designated space for vendors and shade during warm summer months. However, event staking has been known to cause several short and long-term issues that influence our ability to properly maintain the landscape.

Stakes frequently hit irrigation lines, underground electric lines, and tree roots. Although event planners may not notice the harmful effects immediately, the stakes are considered damaging to the park. When a stake collides with an irrigation pipe, small rocks and dirt particles are transferred into the pipe through breaks (sometimes very small cracks other times large holes). When the irrigation (water) is turned on the small particles are pushed throughout the system, traveling into the valves and sprinkler heads. At this point, there is little that plumbers can do to prevent clogs and ensure proper water flow. This issue has resulted in wasted water, less healthy trees and turf, and increased cost of maintenance. Since the breaks caused by staking can be very small, the water leaks in the pipe may not be significant enough for Salt Lake City plumbers to visually identify where the debris enters the line. In this case, rocks and dirt continue to enter the line which reduces the lifespan of the irrigation system.

All trees are sensitive to root disturbance. Long stakes pounded near the magnificent (many over 100 year old) trees of Washington Square are destructive to the urban forest. Ninety percent of a tree's root system is located in the first 12 to 18 inches of soil. The roots extend radially from the trunk one to two times the height of the tree. The effects of the staking on preexisting trees can be quite devastating and can take five to ten years to become fully visible.

Salt Lake City Parks and Public Lands has banned staking in parks beginning in 2019. There are alternatives to using stakes to stabilize the canopies and tents during event season. In fact, most canopies can be easily secured by using water barrels or concrete blocks. Though these alternatives may be considered more difficult to transport, they will ensure that critical infrastructure, such as irrigation systems, and the celebrated trees are not negatively impacted. Our goal is to ensure that City parks are healthy and properly maintained year after year.

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