

### **CHAPTER 3. PLAN AREA GENERAL POLICIES**

This Chapter presents general Salt Lake County policies applicable to the entire Plan area.

Highlighted text summarizes policies. The order of issues addressed is not intended to reflect their relative importance or policy priorities. Application of certain policies to specific Canyons is discussed in Chapter 6. Recommendations for the implementation of several of the policies are provided in Chapter 7.

#### **WATERSHED AND WATER QUALITY PROTECTION**

**SALT LAKE COUNTY WILL CONTINUE TO COOPERATE WITH SALT LAKE CITY-COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH, THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE, AND SALT LAKE CITY TO IMPLEMENT ANTIDegradation STANDARDS, STREAM SET-BACK AND ENVIRONMENT ZONES, MONITORING PROGRAMS, ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES, AND OTHER CANYON WATERSHED POLICIES TO MAINTAIN EXCELLENT WATER QUALITY IN THE CANYONS.**

**ALL STREAM SEGMENTS IN THE PLAN AREA HAVE BEEN DESIGNATED BY THE STATE UNDER THE CLEAN WATER ACT FOR ANTIDegradation, WHICH MEANS CANYON POLICIES MUST PREVENT ANY WATER QUALITY Degradation.**

The Salt Lake Valley has enjoyed excellent quality water from the Wasatch Canyons since settlement of the Valley. The proximity of these water supplies coupled with their relative purity allows Salt Lake Valley residents an inexpensive, plentiful source of water.

Consistent with federal and state law, one of the primary uses of the canyons is as a watershed for the Salt Lake Valley. All uses will be carefully reviewed by Salt Lake County with an initial determination of whether the activity after mitigation measures would adversely impact the watershed.

Plan policies could lead to further temporary or long-term restrictions in high-use areas in the canyons. For example, in some high-use recreation areas where watershed degradation is determined to occur, restrictions could be imposed including fire restrictions, additional camping and picnic area limitations, Off-Highway Vehicle restrictions, and use by permit only.

Maintenance of instream flows has aesthetic, wildlife, fish, vegetative, and channel preservation benefits. Salt Lake County supports the provision for maintenance of water flows in Canyon streams in future decisions affecting canyon water use. However, the County recognizes that this goal is complicated by the full ownership (appropriation) of Canyon streams and the nature of

western water law requiring the diversion of water from water courses as a criteria for establishing beneficial use. Salt Lake County recommends that owners of water rights review the potential for committing water rights to instream flows on a canyon-by-canyon and case-by-case basis and consider retention of minimum flows in the streams to maintain aquatic and riparian habitat.

#### INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

**A WASATCH CANYONS COORDINATING COMMITTEE SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED AND COMPOSED OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF FROM ENTITIES WITH CANYON MANAGEMENT JURISDICTION TO IMPROVE COORDINATION, COOPERATION, DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION, AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN AND AWARENESS OF CANYON POLICIES AND ISSUES. THE CANYONS COORDINATING COMMITTEE SHOULD NOT BE A DECISIONMAKING BODY NOR SHOULD IT HAVE REGULATORY AUTHORITY.**

Multiple jurisdictions share management responsibilities in the Canyons. Coordination among them has occurred informally and on a case-by-case basis. Well-established working relationships have generally provided opportunities for governmental entities to consider one another's activities and to share information. Occasionally, however, activities or projects do not receive consistent attention and in most Canyon matters, decisions or policies of one entity affect the others.

Many of the policies established by this Plan will require effective intergovernmental cooperation and communication in order to be realized. The ad-hoc, informal relationships which have afforded cooperation to date do not provide the forum necessary to effectively address the issues in this Plan or future issues.

The Wasatch Canyons Coordinating Committee is intended to improve coordination and communication among entities. Committee members would keep their respective agency policymakers apprised of committee agendas and activities. County policy decisions would remain with the Salt Lake County Planning Commission and County Commission and other organizations the County Commission authorizes to study the future of the canyon areas. Other member entities would retain their respective responsibilities and authorities.

#### PRIVATE LAND ACQUISITION

**SALT LAKE COUNTY, THE TOWN OF ALTA, SALT LAKE CITY, AND THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE SHOULD JOINTLY DEVELOP CRITERIA FOR LAND ACQUISITION SETTING FORTH PURPOSES, PRIORITIES, AND FUNDING OPTIONS FOR LAND PURCHASES.**

**THE ENTITIES SHOULD ACQUIRE SELECTED, PRIMARILY UNDEVELOPED, PRIVATE LANDS TO ASSURE ACCESS TO EXISTING PUBLIC LAND, TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL AREAS FOR PUBLIC USE, TO PROTECT PARTICULARLY SCENIC OR SENSITIVE AREAS FROM DEVELOPMENT, OR TO PROTECT THE WATERSHED. SALT LAKE COUNTY SHOULD ESTABLISH A PROGRAM FOR ACQUISITION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY AND INVESTIGATE POTENTIAL PROGRAM FUNDING SOURCES.**

The Canyons cannot sustain projected growth in demand for uses without stressing the Canyon environment and increasing conflicts among users. While only twenty percent of the land within the Wasatch Canyons is privately owned, the public often unknowingly uses it without landowner consent for recreation or access to public lands.

While there are natural limits to the levels of use which can be sustained in the Canyons, selective acquisition of private property can increase the areas available for public use, assure continued access to existing public lands, and reduce the potential for conflict between private property owners and the user public.

Limited funding is currently available for such acquisitions. The U.S. Forest Service has a modest fund available through the Wasatch Receipts Act. The U.S. Land and Water Conservation Fund has historically been a source for funding acquisition of particularly sensitive or desirable lands for public use, but in recent years has had constrained funding. In 1988, Salt Lake City established a Watershed Protection Fund to purchase private lands critical to protecting the Valley water supply. The Trust for Public Lands and the Nature Conservancy are private organizations which can assist in land purchase transactions if sufficient public funds will eventually be available for the purchase.

Cooperation in establishing acquisition criteria will reduce duplication among the entities, will help assure that priority acquisitions are pursued first, and will assure that the appropriate entities have a mutual understanding of their individual and collective potential for success in an acquisition program. Cooperation can also be effective in identifying alternative funding sources and imaginative purchase strategies, including the use of third party public interest groups.

The criteria should provide for acquisition of private lands currently used for access to trailheads or other public land recreational opportunities, or which are critical for protection of water quality and the watersheds.

## **AESTHETIC STANDARDS**

**SALT LAKE COUNTY WILL PREPARE AND IMPLEMENT ARCHITECTURAL STANDARDS TO GUIDE BUILDING DESIGN, MASS AND PLACEMENT OF STRUCTURES IN THE PLAN AREA TO ENSURE A MORE HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN-MADE STRUCTURES AND THE CANYON SETTING. DEVELOPMENT OF THE STANDARDS WILL BE REVIEWED WITH DESIGN PROFESSIONALS, OTHER CANYON JURISDICTIONS, THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE AND CANYON ASSOCIATIONS.**

In a sensitive environment such as the Wasatch Canyons, aesthetic and development guidelines provide assurances that development will be compatible to the natural landscape, and consistent with the public welfare and enjoyment of the setting.

Aesthetic concerns are now addressed in the County Zoning ordinance and the forest plan. Under County Zoning designations building materials must preserve the natural beauty and blend harmoniously into the environment. These provisions establish a foundation for aesthetic control, but fall short of providing comprehensive guidelines on the aesthetic design of structures to minimize their visual distraction from the Canyon environment.

Architectural standards will significantly and beneficially supplement existing aesthetic guidelines for Canyon structures and will provide a clear indication to builders and developers of the nature and appearance of structures which would be most acceptable within the Canyons.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

**THE WASATCH CANYONS COORDINATING COMMITTEE SHOULD SERVE AS A CATALYST TO WORK WITH THE APPROPRIATE ENTITIES TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE CANYON SAFETY PROGRAM.**

Increased Canyon use exposes more and more people to natural hazards inherent in mountainous areas, and increases the risk of fire and human caused public safety problems.

The winding canyon roads, steep grades, often dry vegetation, avalanche paths, rock fall areas, landslides, other natural hazards, and quickly changing weather all have the potential of inflicting serious injury or damage to people and property.

The Wasatch Canyons Coordinating Committee should work with the appropriate entities toward the development of more comprehensive fire safety standards, improved fire fighting capability, more effective avalanche danger awareness, avalanche control and rescue coordination, earth movement danger awareness and mitigation, flood hazard awareness and mitigation, earthquake

hazard mitigation plans including post-earthquake evacuation plans and restoration of essential lifeline services (roads, utilities, sewers, communications) across active faults at the canyon mouths, a permanent program for safety inspection of commercial buses and vans used within the canyons, and appropriate user guidelines for snowplay activities.

## **HANDICAPPED ACCESS/OPPORTUNITIES**

**NEW FACILITIES IN THE CANYONS AND EXISTING FACILITIES, UPON RENOVATION, ARE REQUIRED TO BE BARRIER-FREE. JURISDICTIONS SHOULD MAKE PROGRESS TOWARD MAKING ALL PUBLIC STRUCTURES ACCESSIBLE TO THE HANDICAPPED AND WORK WITH THE COMMUNITY TO IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS SPECIFIC NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES.**

Persons with physical disabilities should not be denied opportunities for solitude and outdoor recreation available to the general populace because of outdated facilities.

## **HUNTING**

**HUNTING IS AN EFFICIENT BIG-GAME MANAGEMENT TOOL AND POPULAR SPORT WITHIN THE PLAN AREA.**

Hunting is an enduring Canyon activity and key wildlife management tool. It can be used to effectively and selectively control herd size and limit wildlife to a level which can be reasonably sustained in good health by the Canyon habitat.

A Salt Lake County/State Division of Wildlife Resources agreement on hunting requires a special hunting permit in the Canyons and appears to resolve Canyon user conflicts.

The agreement reduces conflict between property owners and hunters, and reduces the possibility for hunting-related accidents by prohibiting discharge of rifles within one mile and shotguns within 200 yards of any occupied structure. As a control measure and to provide hunters Canyon specific regulations, a Salt Lake County Canyons big-game hunting permit is required as well as a State hunting license for hunting in the Canyons. Other site specific regulations also apply: by Town Ordinance, no discharge of firearms and no hunting of any kind is allowed within the boundaries of the Town of Alta; and, U.S. Forest Service regulations prohibit the discharge of firearms within 150 yards of established campgrounds or picnic areas.

## **POSSIBLE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA DESIGNATION**

**CONGRESSIONAL ENACTMENT OF LEGISLATION TO INCLUDE THE PLAN AREA IN A NATIONAL RECREATION AREA MUST PROVIDE FUNDS TO MITIGATE EFFECTS OF POTENTIAL INCREASED USER LEVELS, TO IMPROVE EXISTING FOREST SERVICE RECREATION AND SANITATION FACILITIES, AND TO ACQUIRE LANDS FOR WATERSHED PROTECTION AND TRAILHEAD AND PUBLIC LAND ACCESS.**

Legislation was introduced in the 100th Congress to designate portions of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest, including the Wasatch Canyons, as a National Recreation Area (NRA). While no action was taken on the bill in 1988, its sponsor, Congressman Wayne Owens, intends to reintroduce the bill in the 101st Congress and pursue its active consideration.

Federal policy regarding National Recreation Areas is flexible so that specific circumstances of an area so designated can be addressed. Designation as a NRA does, though, mean a greater emphasis on the recreational aspects of multiple use Forest Service management principles.

A NRA designation for the Wasatch Canyons could lead to substantial increases in visitors to the Canyons. In the past, over-use of the Canyons without adequate controls led to watershed deterioration. Certain areas within the Canyons currently show visible effects of sustained heavy use and there is a need to upgrade some visitor facilities for even the existing user population.

It may be possible to include the Canyons in a NRA, and make the Canyons a model area for high-recreation use while maintaining watershed protection, but such an objective would need to be explicitly stated in the creation of the NRA with specific measures outlined and funded.

## **LAND EXCHANGES**

**LAND EXCHANGES SHOULD BE STUDIED AS A MEANS OF CONSOLIDATING LAND OWNERSHIP PATTERNS AND OF IMPROVING LAND MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES. THE PROPOSED SALT LAKE CITY AND FOREST SERVICE LAND EXCHANGE IN THE NORTHERN WASATCH CANYONS IS ENDORSED.**

Land exchanges can be a effective means of adjusting land ownership configurations to consolidate lands and improve land management opportunities under the respective jurisdictions.

Public land ownership in the Northern Wasatch Canyons (City Creek, Red Butte, Emigration, and Parleys) is in a checkerboard configuration of mixed Forest Service and City lands. Although these two jurisdictions have enjoyed a cooperative relationship in the management of their respective lands, they have agreed that land management opportunities for both the Forest Service and the City would be improved if land ownership could be consolidated. Salt Lake City and the Forest Service are actively considering a land exchange proposal for this purpose.

#### CANYON USER EDUCATION

**AFFECTED GOVERNMENTAL JURISDICTIONS SHOULD COOPERATE TO EDUCATE CANYON USERS TO PRESERVE THE CANYON ENVIRONMENT.**

Improved canyon user education programs could help preserve environmental quality. A coordinated program should be instituted to inform users about trail courtesy, pack-in/pack-out, respect for private property, fire safety and dangers, natural hazards including avalanche dangers, hunting regulations, pet, stream, wilderness, and off road vehicle restrictions and general protection of the natural environment.

