

Utah's water math is tightening. Your capital plan can't run on last year's assumptions.

A shrinking Great Salt Lake, an unsettled Colorado River, among the fastest population growth in the country, and a \$60 billion infrastructure bill coming due. For a utility CFO or capital lead, every one of those forces reshuffles the projects on your list. Invizion helps Utah utilities re-sequence a capital portfolio in a click — and defend every decision.

800K AF¹ Additional sustained inflow <i>per year</i> scientists say the Great Salt Lake needs to return to a healthy elevation — the lake ended 2025 at its third-lowest level on record.	\$38.2B² Of Utah's ~\$60B in projected water-infrastructure need through 2060 is for drinking water alone, per the Division of Water Resources.	169 gal³ Per-person daily water use in Utah — the second-highest of any U.S. state, a demand baseline under intense conservation pressure.	\$175M+⁴ Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law water dollars flowing to Utah since 2022 through the state's revolving-fund programs.
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THE UTAH LANDSCAPE

Four forces are moving your project list at once

None of these is theoretical, and none of them waits for your next budget cycle. Together they mean the capital plan you approved last year may already be the wrong plan.

SUPPLY — GREAT SALT LAKE

A terminal lake in “serious adverse effects” territory

The Great Salt Lake ended the 2025 water year at 4,191.1 feet — its third-lowest level since record-keeping began in 1903, and firmly in what the state calls “serious adverse effects” territory. Conservation, leasing, and infrastructure moved roughly 400,000 acre-feet toward the lake from 2021–2025, but scientists estimate an additional *sustained* 800,000 acre-feet per year would be needed to reach a healthy elevation.

More than 120 square miles of lakebed are already exposed in Farmington Bay alone, creating dust hotspots and a public-health driver that is reshaping upstream water policy — and, downstream, the demand and conservation assumptions behind every utility’s capital plan.

SUPPLY — COLORADO RIVER

An upper-basin share that isn’t settled past 2026

Utah holds 23% of the Upper Colorado River Basin’s apportionment under the 1948 Compact — the second-largest upper-basin share after Colorado. The interim operating guidelines that govern Lakes Powell and Mead expire at the end of 2026, and the post-2026 framework is still being negotiated.

For utilities on the Wasatch Front and in the Uinta Basin, that means planning supply-side capital — new sources, treatment, reuse — against an allocation number that could still move. The projects don’t wait for the negotiation to conclude.

DEMAND — GROWTH

The country's growth leader, on a per-capita baseline that's already high

Utah tied for the third-fastest-growing state in 2024 at 1.8%, adding roughly 60,000 residents to a population that has passed 3.5 million.⁷ Every new connection is a capacity commitment, and it lands on a system whose per-person use — about 169 gallons a day — is the second-highest in the nation³

Growth-driven capacity competes for the same dollars as renewal and conservation retrofits. The sequencing between them is exactly what boards and councils fight over.

COMPLIANCE — AGING & QUALITY

A \$60 billion need, and new mandates on top of it

The Utah Division of Water Resources projects roughly \$60 billion in water-infrastructure need through 2060 — about \$38.2 billion for drinking water, \$15 billion for water quality, and \$6 billion for irrigation and canals²

On top of renewal, PFAS is now a funded mandate: 16 Utah drinking-water systems reported PFAS detections under EPA's UCMR 5 monitoring, and systems including Salt Lake City and Park City measured PFOS above the new 4 ppt federal limit — with Hill Air Force Base a major legacy source⁸ New obligations don't replace the backlog. They stack on it, and something on the list has to move.

WHO RUNS UTAH'S WATER

A public, district-driven system — wholesale conservancy districts and municipal retailers

Utah's water is overwhelmingly public. Four large conservancy districts wholesale treated and raw water to the Wasatch Front; cities and improvement districts retail it to the tap. Investor-owned systems exist but are a small minority. The pressures are shared; the accountability path runs through boards and councils, not a rate commission.

Wholesale & municipal providers

Rates set by district boards and city councils · capital approved by governing bodies

Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District 600,000+ served in Salt Lake County · ~90% wholesale⁹

Central Utah Water Conservancy District Utah's largest district · 7 counties · 400,000+ AF/yr · Central Utah Project¹⁰

Weber Basin Water Conservancy District 700,000+ served · 5 counties · ~230,000 AF/yr¹¹

Salt Lake City Dept. of Public Utilities Oldest retail water provider in the West (est. 1876)¹²

Metropolitan Water District of Salt Lake & Sandy Wholesale supply to Salt Lake City & Sandy

Utah's four big conservancy districts — Jordan Valley, Central Utah, Weber Basin, and Washington County — carry the wholesale supply and much of the largest capital.

Investor-owned & small systems

IOUs rate-regulated by the Public Service Commission

Investor-owned water utilities A small minority in Utah — rate-regulated by the PSC¹³

Improvement & special service districts Retail delivery across suburban and rural Utah

Small & rural community systems Where funding and compliance gaps hit hardest

Unlike most states, investor-owned water is a small slice in Utah — the Public Service Commission has no authority over municipal, conservancy-district, or improvement-district systems¹³

Every capital dollar has to be defensible

In Utah most water rates are set in public by district boards and city councils — not by a commission. The question they ask is the same one the PSC asks of an IOU: why this project, why now, why at this cost?

Public Service Commission regulates rates and capital recovery only for investor-owned and cooperative water and sewer utilities — a small minority of Utah systems¹³

Conservancy–district boards & city councils set the rates for the overwhelming majority of Utahns' water — approved in open meetings, in front of ratepayers, with no PSC review¹³

Utah Division of Drinking Water (DEQ) holds Safe Drinking Water Act primacy — lead service line inventories, PFAS monitoring, and the compliance capital that follows⁸

Division of Water Resources frames the statewide need and the funding case — its ~\$60B-through-2060 estimate is the number lawmakers now plan against²

The money is moving — can your plan absorb it?

Utah utilities have more capital funding available than in a generation, layered from federal, state, and local sources. The constraint is no longer only dollars — it's readiness: which projects are shovel-ready, which qualify, and how the timing lines up with everything else on the list.

\$62.3M in Drinking Water SRF was announced for Utah in 2023 under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, with dedicated set-asides for lead lines and disadvantaged communities¹⁴

\$175M+ since 2022 in total BIL water funding has flowed to Utah's Clean Water and Drinking Water revolving funds — nearly half of a recent \$43.9M tranche available as grants or principal forgiveness⁴

Water Infrastructure Restricted Account (~\$241M in 2024) plus a dedicated share of state sales tax fund Utah's own water program — a state backstop as federal dollars are described as “dwindling.”²

Emerging-contaminant & PFAS funding within the SRF programs is now flowing to treatment upgrades — a funded mandate for the 16 systems that reported PFAS detections⁴⁸

UTAH WATER, IN BRIEF

Questions Utah utility leaders are asking

Short, sourced answers — the same facts we'll dig into on a call, in the context of your system.

How bad is the Great Salt Lake decline?

The lake ended the 2025 water year at 4,191.1 feet, its third-lowest level on record and within the state's "serious adverse effects" range. About 400,000 acre-feet reached the lake through conservation and leasing from 2021–2025, but scientists estimate a sustained additional 800,000 acre-feet per year is needed to restore a healthy elevation. More than 120 square miles of lakebed are exposed in Farmington Bay, driving dust and public-health concerns¹.

How much water infrastructure investment does Utah need?

The Utah Division of Water Resources projects roughly \$60 billion in water-infrastructure need through 2060 — about \$38.2 billion for drinking water, \$15 billion for water quality, and \$6 billion for irrigation and canals. State officials have called it a "big, big number," and it is now the baseline lawmakers plan against².

Who sets water rates in Utah — is it the Public Service Commission?

For most Utahns, no. The PSC regulates rates only for investor-owned and cooperative water and sewer utilities, which are a small minority in Utah. The bulk of the state's water is delivered by conservancy districts, cities, and improvement districts, whose rates and capital plans are set by their own boards and councils in public — outside PSC jurisdiction³.

Does Utah have a PFAS problem, and is there funding for it?

Sixteen Utah drinking-water systems reported PFAS detections under EPA's UCMR 5 monitoring, and systems including Salt Lake City and Park City measured PFOS above the 4 ppt federal limit, with Hill Air Force Base a major legacy source. PFAS and emerging-contaminant funding is now flowing to Utah through the state's SRF programs to pay for treatment upgrades⁴.

What federal funding is available to Utah water utilities?

Utah has received more than \$175 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law water funding since 2022 through its Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds, including a \$62.3 million drinking-water announcement in 2023 and a \$43.9 million tranche in 2024 — nearly half of it available as grants or principal-forgiveness loans for disadvantaged communities. The state also maintains a Water Infrastructure Restricted Account (about \$241 million in 2024).
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How does Invizion help Utah water utilities plan capital?

Invizion is scenario-based capital portfolio optimization for water utilities. It lets you model how a Great Salt Lake mandate, a Colorado River allocation change, a growth surge, or a PFAS deadline reshuffles your whole project list, re-sequence the portfolio automatically, and keep a defensible record of every decision for your board, your council, or ratepayers. The best next step is a short first meeting to look at it against your own program.

REFERENCES

Sources

Every figure in this briefing is tied to a primary or authoritative source.

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ABOUT INVIZION

Capital program optimization for utilities

Invizion is a purpose-built capital lifecycle management platform for water and wastewater utilities. It integrates budgeting, CIP, scenario analysis, and funding-source tracking in one system — so utilities can re-sequence a capital portfolio in a click and demonstrate audit-ready, defensible decisions to regulators, boards, and rating agencies.

See what a defensible Utah capital plan looks like — book a 20-minute first meeting.

Book your first meeting →