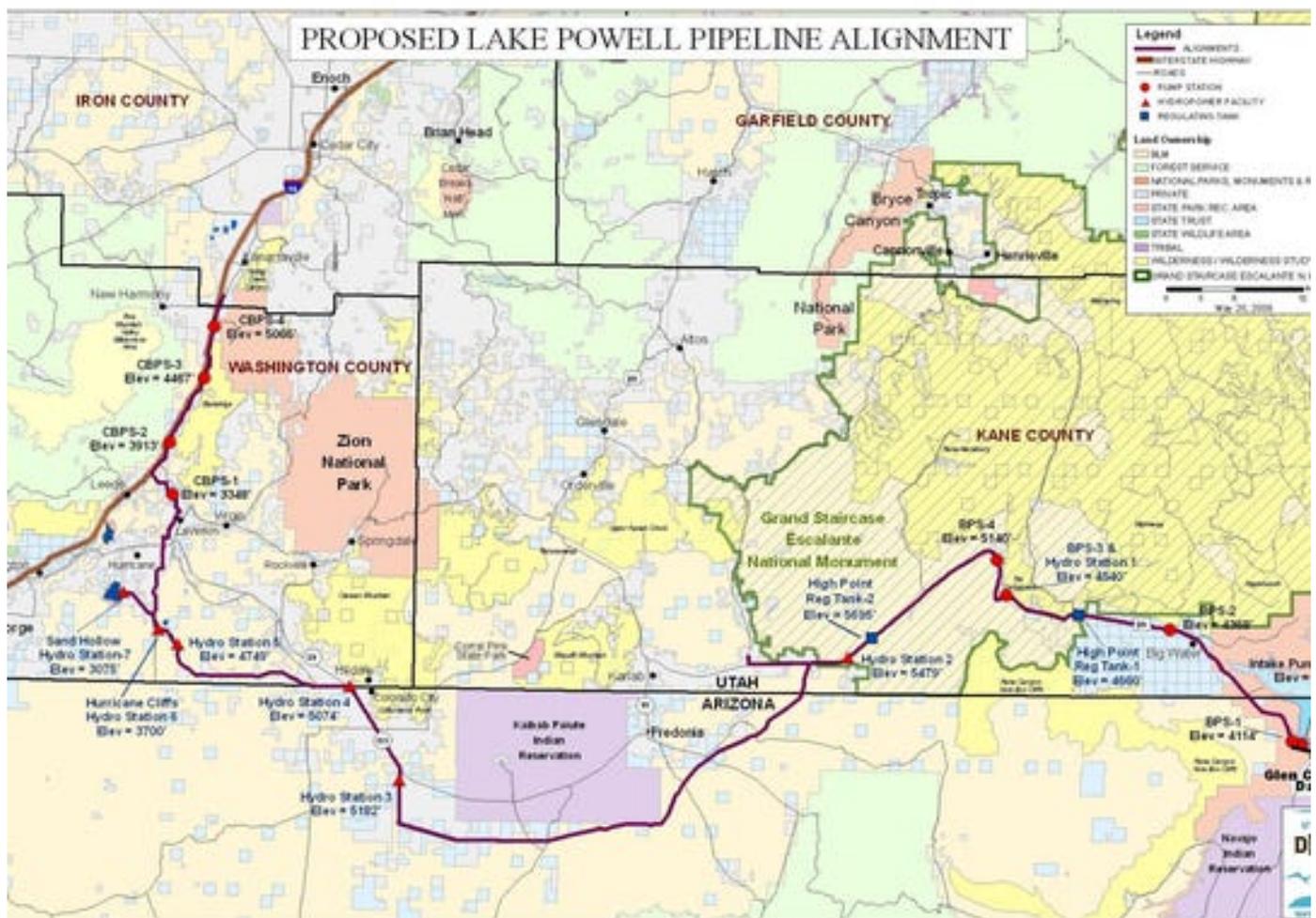


# New agency assigned to Lake Powell Pipeline project could save \$100 million, officials say

[Lexi Peery](#) Updated 5:19 p.m. MT Oct. 29, 2019



The Lake Powell Pipeline is planned to take 86,000 acre feet of Colorado River water 138 miles to Sand Hollow Reservoir in Hurricane. *(Photo: Courtesy/Utah Department of Natural Resources)*

A new federal agency is taking on the permitting process for

the Lake Powell Pipeline.

The Bureau of Reclamation was announced Tuesday as the new lead in overseeing the National Environmental Protection Act process for the pipeline, according to the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The Utah Board of Water Resources withdrew its application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission after cutting two proposed reservoirs from the project in September. The reservoirs, at the top and bottom of Hurricane Cliffs, would have generated hydropower at peak times.

Soon after the withdrawal from FERC, the board asked the Interior Department to appoint the Bureau of Reclamation to lead the completion of the NEPA review. When the project withdrew its application with FERC, a press release stated the change would save the project \$100 million.

*"We've spent our whole lives working with the Department of the Interior*

Washington County Water Conservancy District General Manager Ron Thompson said he thinks it was an excellent choice for the Department of the Interior to assign the project to the Bureau of Reclamation.

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*and we're excited for them to take the lead and hope they will move things more expeditiously.*

**Ron Thompson, Washington County Water Conservancy District General Manager**

[Washington County could pay for it, but questions remain](#)

"We've spent our whole lives working with Department of the Interior and we're excited for them to take the lead and hope they will move things more expeditiously," Thompson said. "[The Bureau of Reclamation] certainly understands water."

According to Karry Rathje, spokesperson for the Washington County Water Conservancy District, the timeline for the permitting process is anticipated to stay the same. All the studies done to date in relation to the pipeline proposal will be sent to the Bureau of Reclamation.

[FERC announced in September 2018](#) that it would only consider permitting the hydroelectric facilities, leaving the rest of the proposed 140-mile pipeline to be overseen by another federal agency, which hadn't been decided. Officials first applied for [federal review of the proposal](#)

[in 2016.](#)

The proposed pipeline divert around 86,000 acre feet from the Colorado River to be used in Washington and Kane counties, which proponents of the project say will help meet the growing population in the area. Those against the pipeline have called for county residents to improve water conservation before jumping to [an estimated \\$1.2-\\$1.5 billion project](#) that would be relying on a water source that's [already shrinking](#).

*Lexi Peery is the environment, politics and development reporter for The Spectrum & Daily News, a USA TODAY Network newsroom based in southern Utah. You can reach her at [lpeery@thespectrum.com](mailto:lpeery@thespectrum.com) and follow her on Twitter [@LexiFP](#).*

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