

# Bureau of Reclamation takes up review of Lake Powell Pipeline

New federal agency steps in on southern Utah water supply project

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*Tom Smart, Deseret Morning News*

SALT LAKE CITY — The elimination of the major hydropower components of the proposed Lake Powell Pipeline means a new federal agency will review the project and determine if it is environmentally sound to move forward.

“The division looks forward to working with reclamation on updating the timeline and cost estimate for the project and completing the environmental impact statement,” Eric Millis, director of the Utah Division of Water Resources, announced Tuesday

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission had been the reviewing agency. After a September decision by the Utah Board of Water Resources to eliminate two reservoirs for the generation of electricity during peak demand, that entity was no longer the appropriate reviewing agency.

The 140-mile pipeline, estimated to cost \$1.43 billion, will deliver 86,249 acre-feet of water to Washington and Kane counties. An acre-foot of water is enough to cover one football field at a depth of one foot.

It will begin near Glen Canyon Dam at Lake Powell and end at the Sand Hollow Reservoir in Washington County.

An August legislative audit raised questions about the terms of the pipeline's cost repayment, including interest, on the state-sponsored project and said clarification of that process would deliver more certainty for taxpayers.

Critics have slammed the project as a financial boondoggle that will strap all the state's taxpayers, not just users of the water, but the audit found that the Lake Powell Pipeline's funding structure should be sufficient to cover costs.

Project proponents say the pipeline is necessary to meet the needs of a growing population and to diversify water supply resources. Most of southern Utah residents rely on a single and volatile source of water — the Virgin River — which has been challenged by drought conditions.

Construction of the pipeline won't begin until 70% of the water is under contract.

Karry Rathje, with the Washington County Water Conservancy District, said the shift to another federal

agency to review the project should not result in any delays.