

Transcription of the KCPW Radio from the Denkers Studios at Library Square in Salt Lake City
December 10, 2007 10:30 am

Lara Jones: I'm Laura Jones and it's time for the Bottomline Rewind. Today's show focus on the business of water Jeff Niermeyer director of Public Utilities for Salt Lake City starting with a little water 101 for Salt Lake City residents.

Jeff Niermeyer: "Well your water comes from a variety of sources. We get water from the free-flowing mountain streams that are on the east side of the valley. We also get water from the Du Du Duchesne river through the weber river that all come as part of the deer creek project that's put together by the metropolitan water district back in the 1930's. And now were also getting water actually off of the Colorado river drainage system through the Jordan River or Jordanelle Project which is part of the Bonneville unit of the Central Utah project water.

Lara Jones: Protecting part of, protecting water ah, ah is important and that means watershed I understand that were looking to increasing the watershed explain what watershed is for us:

Jeff Niermeyer: "Well again if you look at how our citizens uh get their water part of it is that you need to protect the source from which that water comes. If you develop all of your watershed you basically introduce a lot of pollutants and you no longer have the high quality pure water that everybody becomes to expect when they turn on their tap and so its very important that we look at our watershed and how we can protect that to make sure that we preserve that water quality.

Lara Jones: "So its kind of a ring around the foothills uh so to speak"

Jeff Niermeyer: "Yes, it's basically looking um up in the canyons and uh you know the cities started its watershed pra a program a decades ago understanding that if you don't have a pure supply of water coming into the valley then you really threaten the economic engine of the valley and so the city recognized that its important to protect this resource so that we can grow as a city.

Lara Jones: "So you keep dogs out of the watershed?"

Jeff Niermeyer: "Yeah we keep dogs, we keep horses. We ask people that they behave you know appropriate in terms of not discharging pollutants into the environment and all of that then leads to a pure water supply."

Lara Jones: "So where is that ring currently and where are you looking to expand it"

Jeff Niermeyer: "Well actually were not necessarily looking to expand it. I think what were looking at is that how can we enhance it to make sure that protection goes forward. As you mentioned were looking at five and a half million people in this area and all of those people part of the reason they live here not all of them but eh they get to go up and enjoy these mountains and these foothills which your going to see this tremendous push and crush of people getting up and almost loving these canyons to death. And how do we balance watershed protection and access for the public and the use that we all enjoy. So that's the fine balance were going to try

and strike”

Lara Jones: “Now Salt Lake City’s been accused by a water broker to of hoarding water rights. And I’m curious how uh the city holds water rights and how it plans for their use? As we heard Representative Painter say his law that he’s proposing his bill that he’s proposing forgive me in the next legislative session will give you 30 years municipalities to make that plan.”

Jeff Niermeyer: “Right, currently under the law there’s actually there’s two parts to a water right there’s basically the right to develop that and that’s the uh un-certificated right and after the certificated right and that’s what Pate ur Pat Painters bill looks at is the certificated right before that right now municipalities have the right to hold water rights for 50 years to develop’m as Steve Clyde mentioned a water right takes a lot of planing a lot of design a lot of financing and if you look at the powers that were granted to cities by the constitution the ability to plan for its citizens is one of the founding premises under the constitution. And so cities are statutorily obligated to plan for their citizens and to do that you need to be able to hold water rights for your anticipated growth and within Salt Lake City we still have over 17,000 acres of undeveloped land that can be developed.”

Northwest Quadrant of which over half is open space and wetland

Lara Jones: “So, so how’s that been playing into your plan for future use cause it’s uh I’m sure there’s some water rights developers would love to get their hands on but you as the director of Salt Lake City Public Utilities are looking the down the road and saying X number of uh roof-tops are still to come. Uh, what’s the growth projections here with water?”

Jeff Niermeyer: “Well again we see significant growth up both in populations and cities are here forever ya know um we see challenges you mentioned the drought word earlier we have to plan for the highly variable water supply that this area um perceives and if we don’t have water in storage.

If we don’t keep these water rights so that we can do conjunctive use between ground water and surface waters when we have these drought cycles we will run out of water unless we plan for it and Salt Lake City has done a very good job to plan for these drought cycles the other thing that concerns me now is what are the changes potentially for climate change that are going to impact uh you know the supply of water as we know it.”

Lara Jones: “So, can you give me round numbers though on how many more households or water that’s going to be required to to uh pipe into those households some math?”

How much more water does SLC need?
"upwards of 180,000 acre-feet."

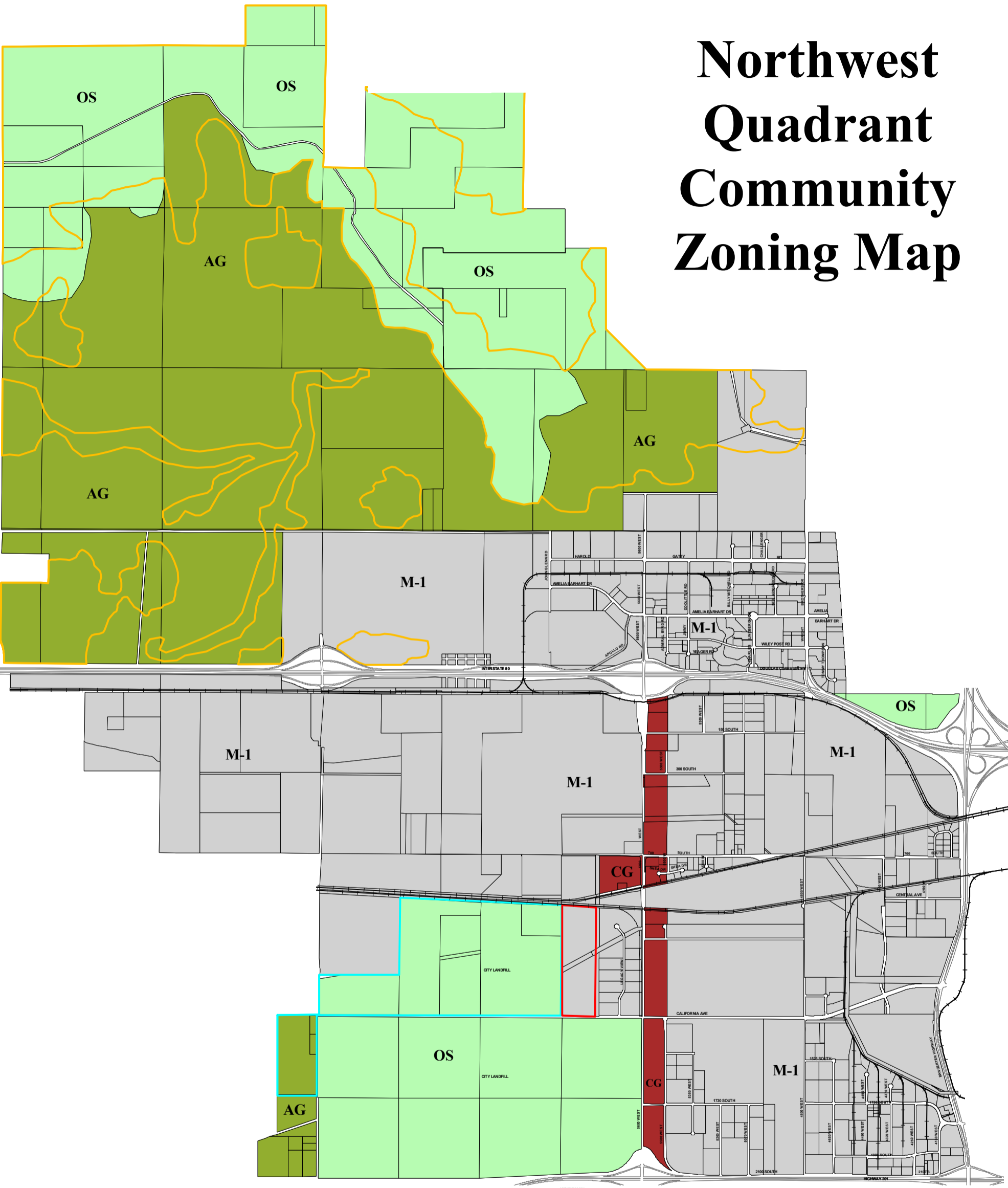
Jeff Niermeyer: “Yeah were looking even with a the uh conservation that we are committed to doing and our reduction of overall use were looking upwards of 180,000 acre-feet of water that may still be required out to the year 2050.”

Lara Jones: “That’s Jeff Niermeyer Salt Lake City Director of Public Utilities on the future water needs of Salt Lake City in the full podcast of today’s Bottomline you can learn the latest about water rights proposed legislation on the issue and what one water rights attorney says will be increasing litigations surrounding this precious resource. I’m Lara Jones and this has been

SLC's 2050 projected population is 225,066. In 2005, SLC used approx. 47,500 acre-feet for a population of 180,000.

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Northwest Quadrant Community Zoning Map



Map Legend

-  Lowland Conservancy Overlay District
-  Transitional Overlay District
-  Landfill Overlay District
-  AG, Agriculture
-  CG, General Commercial
-  M-1, Light Manufacturing
-  OS, Open Space

