



UTAH HUMANITIES
Ideas in Action



For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Deena Pyle

801.201.4300

pyle@utahhumanities.org

Think Water Utah Exhibitions Now Showing in the Salt Lake City and Park City Area

Salt Lake City, Utah, March 22, 2021 – As part of Think Water Utah, a statewide conversation on the critical topic of water presented by Utah Humanities and its partners, [Utah Humanities](#) invites the public to visit two Smithsonian exhibitions, *Water|Ways* and *H2O Today*, along with four associated water-themed exhibitions in the Salt Lake City and Park City area.

Water is an essential component of life on our planet – environmentally, culturally, and historically. What role does water play in your life?

Think Water Utah is a statewide collaboration featuring Smithsonian exhibitions, along with local exhibitions and events that explore how water is essential to Utah communities.



SWANER PRESERVE
AND ECOCENTER

UtahStateUniversity.

***Water|Ways* and *Why Wetlands?* are hosted at the Swaner Preserve and EcoCenter in Park City through March 28th.** *Water|Ways* is a traveling Smithsonian exhibition exploring water as it shapes human culture and our ways of life. *Why Wetlands?* is a new, Spanish-English bilingual, permanent exhibit that explores the wetlands of the Swaner Preserve and the critical role they play in the long-term health of the community and local ecosystem. [Get details here.](#)



***H2O Today* and *Utah's Waterways* are hosted at Cultural Celebration Center through April 19th.** *H2O Today* is a traveling Smithsonian exhibition that explores the beauty and essential nature of water, our planet's lifeblood. *Utah's Waterways* is a juried exhibition of 2-D artworks providing a localized and artistic visual complement to *H2O Today*. [Get details here.](#)

NATURAL HISTORY
MUSEUM OF UTAH

Rio Tinto Center | University of Utah

***Decisions Downstream* at the Natural History Museum of Utah, open through July 31.** In *Decisions Downstream*, a watershed scientist teams up with artists to explore new ways of seeing river habitats. Critical water decisions are being made in Utah. *Decisions Downstream* highlights the water development tools, tradeoffs, and alternatives that can guide our choices. [Get details here.](#)

UMFA
UTAH MUSEUM OF
FINE ARTS

***Confluence* at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts is available through December 5th.** Where does water in Salt Lake Valley come from? Where does it end up? *Confluence* is a visually riveting exhibition that explores water's journey from mountain streams to Great Salt Lake in collaboration with six local organizations. [Get details here.](#)

Hunter Klingensmith, Visitor Experience and Exhibit Manager at the Swaner Preserve and EcoCenter says "Hosting the *Water|Ways* Smithsonian exhibition in partnership with Utah Humanities has given us an exciting opportunity to not only highlight the global importance of water but to explore its unique impacts on our local community. Water plays an essential role in the habitats that make up the Swaner Preserve and the culture of Park City as a whole. In creating our new permanent exhibit *Why Wetlands?* as a companion to *Water|Ways*, we are thrilled to spotlight the rare wetlands that occupy the Preserve and their part in our community's past, present, and future. We are also proud to collaborate with our community in collecting and telling both our historical and current-day water stories. Water is an essential topic, and we are delighted to be involved with the project.

Michael Christensen, Visual Arts Manager and Folklorist at West Valley Arts, remarks that "West Valley Arts is excited to be partnering once again with Utah Humanities. Hosting another Smithsonian Institution exhibit at the Utah Cultural Celebration Center is always a highlight for our programming team, as it allows us to diversify our visual arts and museum offerings.

This particular exhibit, *H2O Today*, explores our vital and essential relationship with our planet's greatest resource, water. The informative and interactive stations encourage visitors to take pause and seriously consider this relationship. By considering the question "what does water mean to you?" visitors are encouraged to deeply explore issues ranging from access and water rights to cleanliness and conservation. I'm particularly interested in the dialogue surrounding Utah's high water use in our nation's second driest state. Utah certainly has an interesting relationship with water. Exploring the exhibit materials has made me seriously consider my relationship with this natural resource, and think seriously about how I can do better, especially in terms of conservation. After visiting *H2O Today*, we hope visitors will engage in a dialogue with neighbors and families to discuss and share what they've learned about this most vital of resources. We have a full slate of auxiliary programs, too, including a film screening, moderated discussions, nature walks along the Jordan River, and a complimentary fine arts exhibition, so please join us and "think about water."

Mindy Wilson, Marketing & Communications Director at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts shares that "The UMFA is honored to participate in this important statewide dialogue through *Confluence*, a collaborative exhibition in the ACME Lab that explores environmental, cultural, and historical perspectives around this essential component of daily life."

Megan van Frank, Director of the Center for Community Heritage at Utah Humanities, is coordinating the statewide Think Water Utah project in Utah. In explaining the role Utah Humanities plays in touring Smithsonian exhibitions in Utah, she says, "We work hard to bring this experience to local communities, and the collaboration among national, state, and community organizations benefits everyone. We work closely with our local partner organizations, helping to support their expertise in hosting a national exhibition. This network strengthens Utah museums and helps to preserve and share Utah history and culture. For Think Water Utah, we've also collaborated with larger urban institutions to present and promote additional water-themed exhibitions. This wider range of partnerships also translates into a wider range of water stories for the public. Because water is such a crucial topic for our state -- particularly with the current drought and ongoing climate change -- each exhibition approaches water's complexity through a different lens." She hopes that visitors to all the exhibitions "will come away with an understanding of how water has shaped the state of Utah, its role in their personal lives, and a sense that we must all engage in decisions about Utah's water future. The entire experience is a unique opportunity for Utahns to tell their own water stories as part of local, state, and national conversations."

Gregory Smoak, Director of the American West Center, University of Utah, and state scholar for Think Water Utah remarks that "Water is life. It has shaped the stunning, inspiring, and often difficult landscapes of our state. It sustains our very existence and has largely defined where Utahns have lived for the past 12,000 years. And there can be no future without water. While the challenges facing Utahns appear daunting, the story of Utah's water ways can offer us a guide. By trying to understand the natural world, its limitations and reasonable opportunities, and considering the many ways in which Utahns have engaged our precious waters, we might use history to map a sustainable way forward."

To learn more about the statewide tour, contact Utah Humanities at 801.359.9670 or visit the [Think Water Utah portion of the Utah Humanities website](#).



Smithsonian Institution

Water|Ways is part of Museum on Main Street, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and Utah Humanities. Support for Museum on Main Street has been provided by the United States Congress. Both *Water|Ways* and *H2O Today* are organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service and adapted from an exhibition organized by the American Museum of Natural History (New York) and the Science Museum of Minnesota (St. Paul), in collaboration with Great Lakes Science Center (Cleveland), Field Museum (Chicago), Instituto Sangari (Sao Paulo), National Museum of Australia (Canberra), Royal Ontario Museum (Toronto), San Diego Natural History Museum, and Science Centre Singapore.

Many thanks for generous support from the State of Utah, Utah Division of Arts & Museums, Utah Division of State History, Utah Museum of Fine Arts, University of Utah American West Center, George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation, Lawrence T. and Janet T. Dee Foundation, Dominion Energy, Rocky Mountain Power, Union Pacific, KCPW Radio, and Utah Public Radio.

About Utah Humanities: Utah Humanities empowers Utahns to improve their communities through active engagement in the humanities. UH is funded by the Salt Lake County Zoo, Arts, and Parks Fund, the State of Utah, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, and through gifts from individuals, foundations, and corporations. Each year, Utah Humanities supports hundreds of educational and cultural programs throughout Utah. For more information, visit www.utahhumanities.org.

###

202 West 300 North • Salt Lake City, Utah 84103 • Phone 801.359.9670 • www.utahhumanities.org