



UTAH HUMANITIES
Ideas in Action



For Immediate Release

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Smithsonian Exhibition, *H2O Today*, Begins Utah Tour with West Valley Arts at the Utah Cultural Celebration Center

Salt Lake City, Utah, January 13, 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](#) announces that the Smithsonian's *H2O Today* exhibition begins its Utah tour with a stay at the [Utah Cultural Celebration Center](#) in West Valley City. Presented by Utah Humanities, the [Smithsonian Institution](#), and communities statewide, the Utah Cultural Celebration Center portion of the *H2O Today* tour takes place from January 21st through April 19th, 2021.



The Smithsonian's *H2O Today* explores the beauty and essential nature of water, our planet's lifeblood. Through immersive content, interactives, and digital media, the exhibition explores the diversity and challenges of our global water sources, as well as Utah's unique relationship with water. *H2O Today* asks the question: "What does water mean to you?"

The Utah Cultural Celebration Center will be hosting and livestreaming events, as well as offer a local companion exhibition.



In combination with *H2O Today*, the Utah Cultural Celebration Center is hosting two local exhibitions. **Utah's Waterways** is a juried exhibition of 2-D artworks providing a localized and artistic visual complement to *H2O Today*. Prizes will be awarded. **Utah Rivers at a Crossroads** features Zach Frankel, Executive Director of the Utah Rivers Council, discussing water conservation in Utah. Watch in the gallery or online at www.wvcarts.org/h2otoday.html.

A full schedule of West Valley Arts' *H2O Today* events can be found in this [event publication](#).

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."

Megan van Frank, Director of the Center for Community Heritage at Utah Humanities, is coordinating the exhibition tour in Utah. In explaining the critical role Utah Humanities plays in bringing the Smithsonian tour to Utah, she says, "We work closely with host organizations to bring this experience to their communities, and the collaboration among national, state, and local organizations benefits everyone. The entire experience directly strengthens Utah museums and helps to preserve and share Utah history." She also hopes that, "visitors to the exhibition will come away with a panoramic and personal view of how water has shaped the state of Utah as well as its role in their personal lives. The exhibition 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 the Utah tour of *H2O Today*, 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](#).

The three host sites and dates for this exhibition are:

- **January 21 – April 19, 2021** | [West Valley Arts at the Utah Cultural Celebration Center](#), 1355 West 3100 South, West Valley City, UT 84119, 801.965.5100
- **April 26 – July 31, 2021** | [Uintah County Heritage Museum](#), 155 E. Main, Vernal, Utah 84078, 435.789.7399
- **August 7, 2021 – February 5, 2022** | [Bear River Heritage Area](#) at the [Hyrum City Museum](#), 50 West Main Street, Hyrum, UT 84319, 435.245.0208

H2O Today has been made possible in Utah by Utah Humanities. *H2O Today* is organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. It was 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.

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About Utah Humanities: Utah Humanities empowers Utahns to improve their communities through active engagement in the humanities. UH is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, Salt Lake County Zoo, Arts, and Parks Fund, the State of Utah, 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.

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