



UTAH HUMANITIES
Ideas in Action



**SWANER PRESERVE
AND ECOCENTER**
Utah State University

For Immediate Release

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As Part of Think Water Utah, *Decisions Downstream* Tours to the Swaner Preserve & EcoCenter in Park City

Salt Lake City, Utah, March 11, 2020 – **Utah Humanities** and the **Swaner Preserve & EcoCenter** announce that *Decisions Downstream* is open at the Swaner EcoCenter from February 25th through May 29th. *Decisions Downstream*, an exhibition that explores how the choices we make about how to develop water resources can have big impacts on river habitats, is part of **Think Water Utah**, a statewide collaboration and conversation on the critical topic of water presented by Utah Humanities and its partners.



Join the Swaner Preserve and EcoCenter to celebrate *Decisions Downstream* on Tuesday, March 29 from 6:00-8:00pm. This event will feature a discussion with Dr. Sarah Null, watershed scientist and co-creator of *Decisions Downstream*, along with exhibition artist Chris Peterson.

Register for the curator talk [here](#) and choose to attend virtually or in person.

About *Decisions Downstream*: All of us—people, fish, and many other creatures—depend on the water in Utah’s rivers. In *Decisions Downstream*, Utah State University watershed scientist Dr. Sarah Null teams up with Utah-based artists Chris Peterson and Carsten Meier to explore new ways of seeing river habitats.

Immerse yourself in beautiful large-scale images created from layers of scientific data, original paintings that capture the transcendent experience of encountering wild fish, and projections onto 3D maps that tell stories of our past water development choices and those we face in the future. Discover how new water management models can help us preserve river habitats and supply water for people. Critical water decisions are being made in Utah. *Decisions Downstream* highlights the water development tools, tradeoffs, and alternatives that can guide our choices.

A full schedule of *Decisions Downstream*-related events at the Swaner Preserve and EcoCenter and surrounding areas is available at the Swaner Preserve’s [online calendar](#) and at this [events publication](#).

Hunter Klingensmith, Visitor Experience and Exhibit Manager at the Swaner Preserve and EcoCenter, says the Swaner is delighted to host *Decisions Downstream* and “hope to engage our guests in the importance of water decisions in Utah and protecting water ways. We want to fuel strong personal connections to our watershed and open an essential dialogue with our community about how water decisions affect every aspect of our lives.” She goes on to say that the Swaner is pairing *Decisions Downstream* with its permanent exhibit *Why Wetlands?*, which “spotlights the rare wetlands that occupy the Preserve and their part in our community’s past, present, and future. We are 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.”

Sarah Null, Associate Professor of Watershed Sciences at Utah State University, co-curated the exhibition with the hope that visitors would understand that rivers and marshes are more than the sum of their parts, that decisions about watersheds don’t have to be a zero-sum game. She says, “When I look at rivers, I see mosaics of habitats – warm

streambanks, deep pools and fast-moving runs. I also see water that could be delivered to cities and farms or used to generate hydropower. The decisions we make to manage our rivers are complex, with tradeoffs between developing water and maintaining the ecosystems that sustain us. My goal is to bring these tradeoffs to the forefront so we can ask ourselves, as a society, what balance we value.”

Megan van Frank, Director of the Center for Community Heritage at Utah Humanities, is coordinating the Think Water Utah project. She says, “The *Decisions Downstream* exhibition is a marvelous contribution from Utah State University, and the design and fabrication from the Natural History Museum of Utah is beautiful. We are excited to help tour the exhibition in the state as part of the Think Water Utah project.” She also hopes that, “visitors will come away with an understanding of the impacts our water use has on the world around us and appreciation for how water planners are thinking creatively about mitigation. We all need to better understand the water systems we rely upon. The entire Think Water Utah project 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 Think Water Utah project 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 Think Water Utah project, contact Utah Humanities at 801.359.9670 or visit the [Think Water Utah portion of the Utah Humanities website](#).

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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 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.

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