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UPHE has been on the frontlines for more than 16 years fighting for the healthy environment that we all deserve. Your involvement has been crucial to the many victories we have achieved in the past and the successes we will have in the coming years. Currently, our priorities include the following.

- The shrinking and potential disappearance of Great Salt Lake is the most important environmental issue and public health threat in Utah’s history. That’s why we were compelled, along with a coalition of other groups, to file a lawsuit targeting the state on their mismanagement of this precious resource.
- We will continue to lead the opposition against the polluting Utah Inland Port. We have already had success in changing the nature of the port in the Salt Lake Valley, but there is more to do.
- Through litigation, we continue to hold accountable companies whose business model includes breaking environmental laws, like the Diesel Brothers, 4 Wheel Parts, and Harley Davidson dealerships.
- We are standing up against the proposed mine in Parley’s Canyon and the Gondola boondoggle in Little Cottonwood Canyon.
- We will continue the fight against the rampant use of pesticides in our state.

**Because of supporters like you, 2023 was our most successful year yet.** For example, we put HEPA air purifiers in every K through 12 school and early education centers in the state that requested one, at no cost to the school. Over 75% of K-12 schools and 61% of pre-schools now have air purifiers. This was one of the most important Utah clean air initiatives in the last 20 years.

Together, we can do more to bring the community’s voice to critical discussions on air quality and other environmental health issues. Thank you again for your part in our past success and your continued support.

Jonny Vasic  
Executive Director
Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment (UPHE) is dedicated to protecting the health and well-being of the residents of Utah by promoting science-based education and interventions that result in progressive, measurable improvements to the environment and our health.

UPHE was formed in 2007 during one of Utah’s worst inversions. UPHE is the largest civic organization of health care professionals in Utah, and one of the largest in the western US. The organization consists of approximately 500 health care professionals, including clinicians, academicians, researchers, biologists, toxicologists, engineers, and air quality specialists, and another 7,500 members and supporters of the general public within Utah.

We are concerned about the health risks present in our environment. Overwhelming, convincing evidence in medical literature demonstrates that a wide array of chronic diseases are more common among people who are exposed to more air pollution, especially particulates.

We believe in Clean Air, Clean Energy and a Clean Future for all Utahns
Year in review

We have been on the frontlines fighting for the healthy environment that we all deserve!

And that’s never been more true than this past year.

Everything essential to human life—our air, water, and food—require a friendly climate and healthy environment, and continuing business as usual is putting it all at risk.

UPHE has always been committed to doing what’s necessary to protect Utahns from the health hazards of the many and varied types of environmental contamination that plague our state.

For the past 16 years UPHE has been leading the fight for a healthy environment that we all want to live in and your involvement has been critical to the many past victories we have achieved and the successes we will have in the coming years.
As we reflect on the achievements and challenges of the past year, it is evident that 2023 was marked by a steadfast commitment to our core priorities. Key among our top priorities were; educating the public and state officials about the need to protect Great Salt Lake, advocating for residents against the dangers from the Utah Inland Port, completing the air purifier program to protect the health of thousands of children across the state, protecting Parley’s Canyon and residents from an attempted mine and gravel pit, raising awareness on the threat of pesticide spraying, and pursuing litigation to protect the health of residents in Utah.
The shrinking and potential disappearance of Great Salt Lake is the most important environmental issue and public health threat in Utah’s history. That’s why we were compelled, along with a coalition of other groups, to file a lawsuit targeting the state on their mismanagement of this precious resource.

Great Salt Lake is the largest saltwater lake in the western hemisphere and an iconic, irreplaceable American ecosystem teeming with biodiversity. It provides habitat for over 10 million migratory birds of 338 species. It supports a variety of industries that contribute billions of dollars to Utah’s economy. But the lake is facing a dire future because of Utah’s failure to ensure that enough water reaches the lake to sustain this vital resource.

If Great Salt Lake’s ecosystem is allowed to collapse, it will create an environmental nightmare. Wherever you have an environmental nightmare, you find a public health nightmare if you wait long enough or look hard enough. Not only will a dried up lakebed be a constant source of dust, but numerous toxins lie in the exposed sediments: heavy metals like mercury (the most potent neurotoxin there is), arsenic, lead, toxic salt, pesticides and decades of residual industrial chemicals. By failing to protect Great Salt Lake, the state is jeopardizing the health of 2.5 million Utahns, an irreplaceable wildlife haven, our economy, and Utah’s defining natural resource.

In other parts of the world, where saline lakes have been allowed to shrivel up because of upstream diversions like those happening at Great Salt Lake, the end result has caused public health disasters from the clouds of relentless toxic dust. Utah’s leaders are prioritizing these water diversions over protecting their own people, so the courts must intervene.
Litigation

UPHE is at the forefront of the fight to save Great Salt Lake. Litigation has become very necessary to protect the residents of Utah’s health.

Legal wins:

- We received great news on our litigation regarding oil shale mining in the Uinta Basin.

Estonian state-owned oil shale company Enefit American Oil is abandoning its lease to mine oil shale on federal public land in northeastern Utah’s Uinta Basin. The decision marks the end of the George W. Bush-era federal oil shale leasing program and came just weeks before a settlement agreement cut the oil shale giant’s planned strip mine and processing facility off from its water supply. The settlement prevents Enefit from exploiting a previous deal to siphon billions of gallons of water from the Green River, above where it flows into the Colorado River, to build the first commercial-scale oil shale mine and processing plant in the U.S. in the Utah desert.

This is a big win for everyone that depends on Colorado River water, and for everyone that has been fighting to prevent more air pollution in Utah.

- In the last few months the lawsuits we have been involved with have also forced a withdrawal of the approval for the Uinta Basin Railway and ended oil shale mining in Utah, for now. We are working tirelessly to hold the state accountable and ensure the protection of our environment and public health.

- We secured a legal settlement with 4 Wheel Parts that will reduce vehicle pollution across the country by ending their nationwide sales of illegal pollution defeat devices and included a remediation fee for non compliant vehicles and penalty.

- UPHE used the Federal Clean Air Act to sue the Diesel Brothers and for breaking pollution laws by tampering with vehicle exhaust systems, and now we are going after local Harley Davidson dealerships.

- We are involved in litigation with the EPA over regional haze issues affecting our Mighty Five National Parks and weakened standards for the Hunter and Huntington coal fired power plants in Southern Utah and joined a national effort with EarthJustice to protect fence-line communities bordering chemical and petroleum plants and so much more.

Lawsuits are just one of the many tools that UPHE is using for the residents of Utah.
HEPA Air Purifier Program

UPHE’s doctors and other medical professionals bring the community's voice to critical discussions on air quality and other environmental health issues.

75% of K-12 schools now have air purifiers in their classrooms!

61% of state-licensed early childhood education centers

We put HEPA air purifiers in every K-12 school and early education center in the state that wanted one, at no cost to the schools.

One of the most important Utah clean air initiatives in the last 20 years.
Parley’s Canyon

The Threat
Parley’s Canyon and the hundreds of thousands of residents within a few miles are at risk from a proposed gravel pit and mine. The DAQ received thousands of comments in opposition to the proposal and will be releasing their decision soon.

What we’re doing
UPHE hosts a weekly coalition meeting to organize against the proposal, and we’ve used our expertise in every public comment period to address the issues with the proposal.

We’ve raised awareness through outreach events and our members and supporters have generated thousands of emails and phone calls to Granite Construction, Governor Cox and others associated with this boondoggle.

We submitted technical comments to the DAQ and are preparing a legal challenge to the pending permit.
The Utah Inland Port Authority (UIPA) has approved four project areas for development, which include Great Salt Lake wetlands, Salt Lake City, Box Elder, Tooele, and Weber counties. Between these project areas there are 11,679 acres inside of wetlands grant lines, and 37,552 wetland acres abutting project areas.

The Utah Inland Port drastically increases diesel emissions, is an irresponsible use of resident tax dollars, and threatens development on wetlands.

21,127
Postcards sent to residents impacted by new port development

40+
signees to our call for a full audit of UIPA
UPHE is leading the fight against pesticide use in the Salt Lake Valley and throughout the state. One of the biggest and most preventable offenders is the Salt Lake City Mosquito Abatement District.

Despite our strong advocacy against the construction of a prison on Great Salt Lake wetlands, the project proceeded. However, this setback served as a catalyst for increased collaboration and activism in our community.

Recognizing the challenges faced by inmates and staff due to mosquito infestations, we organized and collaborated with various groups and activists to advocate for better conditions within the prison.

We are hopeful our pesticide alternatives to reducing mosquitoes in the area will result in a reduction of pesticides sprayed.

Pesticides, including those used by SLCMAD, pose significant health risks, especially to vulnerable populations, and decisions regarding their use should be informed by experts in public health and environmental toxins. Pesticide spraying contributes to local air pollution through VOC emissions and has led to an ineffective and counterproductive chemical arms race against mosquitoes, overshadowing the minimal risk of severe outcomes from West Nile Virus.
UPHE’s Sweet 16 Fall Fundraiser

In our most successful event yet, held at beautiful Red Butte Gardens, UPHE’s board of directors and staff was joined by our wonderful members to celebrate our 16th anniversary in 2023.

Board Member Dr. Courtney Henley presents Environmental Champion Award to Professor Ben Abbott.

Event sponsors
As we reflect on the achievements and impact of UPHE over the past year, media coverage stands as a testament to our dedication and influence in promoting environmental health and advocacy. In 2023, UPHE and its members have been prominently featured in a diverse array of media outlets, demonstrating the breadth and depth of their engagement with critical environmental issues. UPHE has earned media attention that not only underscores its commitment to raising awareness but also highlights the significant strides made in advancing public discourse on pressing environmental concerns in Utah and beyond.

UPHE's social media presence has experienced significant growth throughout the year, welcoming hundreds of new followers. Our efforts garnered recognition from none other than legendary actor Leonardo DiCaprio, who gave a shout-out to our lawsuit aimed at safeguarding Great Salt Lake. Additionally, a highlight of the year was when board member, Dr. Tom Nelson, crafted our most engaging post to date, amassing over 1,000 likes and sparking over 100 comments. These achievements underscore our commitment to environmental advocacy and engagement on digital platforms.
Staff & Volunteer Board of Directors

Left to right:

Jake Jensen, Program Coordinator for K-12 Schools
Ella Anderson, Program Coordinator for Early Education
Brandi O’Brien, Manager of Programs & Development
Jonny Vasic, Executive Director
Coalitions, community partnerships & other groups we work with:

- Center for Biological Diversity
- Earth Justice
- Friends of the Great Salt Lake
- Great Salt Lake Audubon
- Heal Utah
- League of Women Voters
- National Parks Conservation Association
- Natural Resources Defense Council
- 02 Today
- Save Our Canyons

Other groups:

- Save Our Great Salt Lake
- Sierra Club Utah
- SLC Air Protectors
- Utah Citizens Advocating Renewable Energy (UCARE)
- Utah Department of Health and Human Services
- Utah Moms for Clean Air
- Utah Rivers Council
- Utah Tar Sands Resistance
- U of U - Sustainability Office
- Utah Valley Earth Forum
- Western Resource Advocates
- Westside Coalition

- Regional Haze
- Stop the Polluting Port
- Member of Medical Society Consortium on Climate & Health
- Founding Member of the Utah Lead Coalition
- Pesticide Working Group

- Protect Parley’s Coalition
- Protect Great Salt Lake Coalition
- Utah Clean Infrastructure Coalition
- Utah 30 x 30 Coalition
UPHE’s Resource Allocation

UPHE had an extremely successful and productive year, thanks to the generous contributions of our many supporters! We strive to be transparent with how your donations are used, and proud to say that the vast majority goes directly to supporting clean air initiatives and fighting polluting projects!

Allocations of Funds

- Programs, Campaigns & Education: 79%
- Development: 13%
- General Expenses: 8%
- Grants and contracts: 54%
- Individual Donations: 43%
- Other: 3%

Funding Sources

- Individual Donations: 43%
- Grants and contracts: 54%
- Other: 3%

Total: $512,000
Contact us!

Sign up for our weekly email updates to get involved.
You can email us at info@uphe.org

Find us on Facebook here.

Follow us on Instagram.

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UPHE works hard to safeguard Utah’s environment, your family’s health, and the legacy we leave for future generations. Together, we can make Utah a safer, cleaner, healthier place for everyone, and preserve a more livable climate for future generations.