



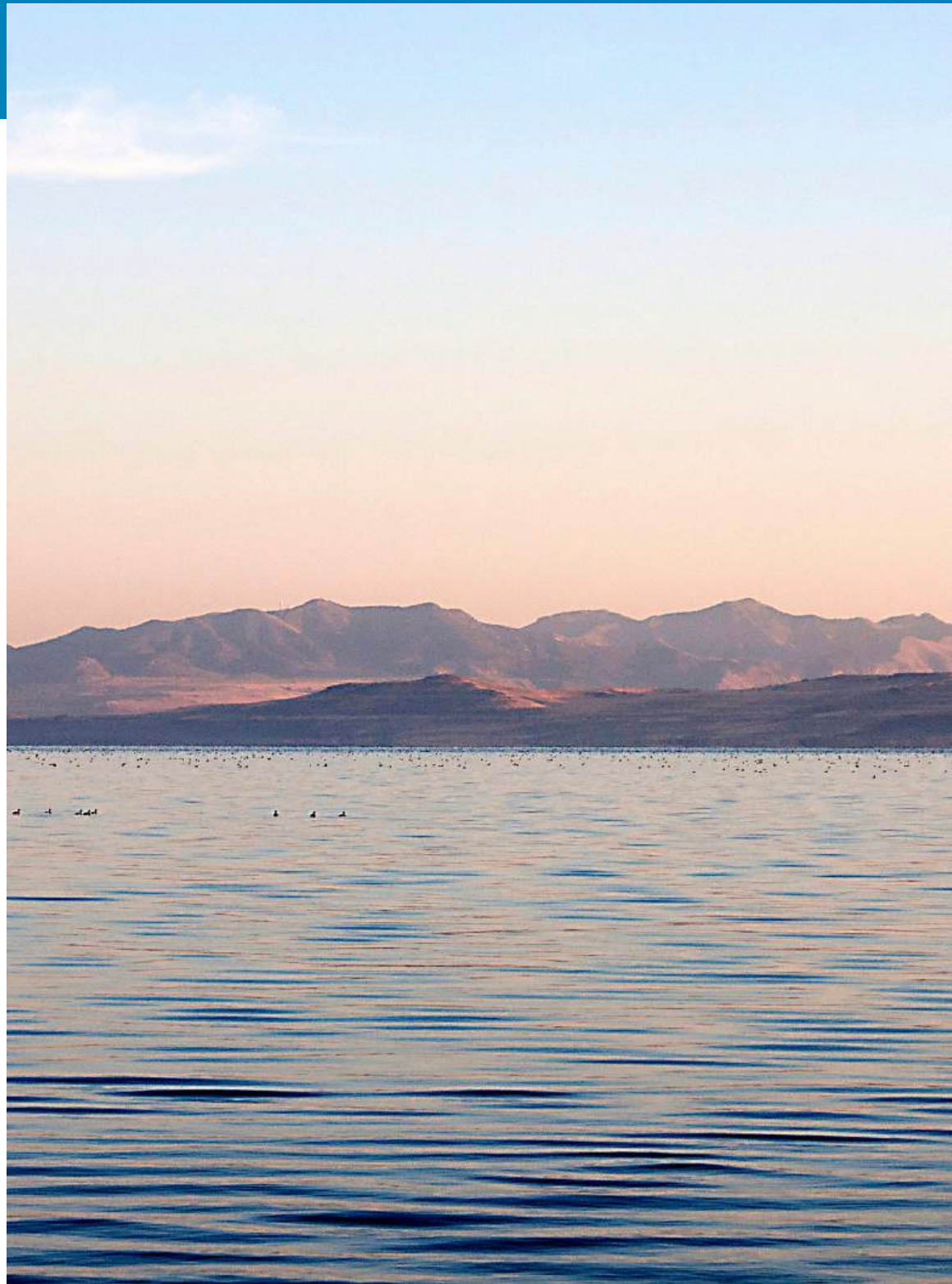
UTAH PHYSICIANS
for a **HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT**

2024 Annual Report



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Jonny Vasic

Executive Director

As the saying used to go, we live in a pretty great state. But of course, it's not without its challenges. My mom helped me have an appreciation for that growing up, whether she knew it or not.

Being a single mother with six children was no easy task and was hard on the family finances. I was the youngest and according to my siblings, the most spoiled, which I don't disagree with, but had no control over. I was also the favorite, but that's another story. Being financially strapped, my mother had to be creative when it came to recreation and getting her kids outside.

Great Salt Lake became our version of Lagoon.

As a child I loved Great Salt Lake, running along the beach stirring up the brine flies. Wading out into the water for what seemed like miles and still only being waist deep. The boynancy of the water, picnics, too many birds to count, and of course hiking, the buffalo and other wildlife on Antelope island. Only later did I realize many Utahns thought of the lake as gross and many others spend their whole lives living in Utah without ever visiting the lake.

As someone recently said, "The lake is a hard place to love."

I think that's true, but I have come to have a new appreciation for the lake, its beauty, its ecological importance, and the fact that it is in real trouble and something must be done to protect this gem of the west. **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 groups, to file a lawsuit targeting the state on their mismanagement of this precious resource.

That's why it's so urgent that we do everything we can to keep the lake from drying up. Mitigation is much more costly and less effective than taking preventive measures now.

Great Salt Lake and many of our other programs is why I'm passionate about the work we do everyday at UPHE.

I feel grateful for the opportunity to work for the things we cherish, and having support from people like you. **After all, Utah is a pretty great state to get to live and recreate in and we plan to keep it that way.**





UPHE is now in its **17th year**, a rather remarkable accomplishment in and of itself because the average life expectancy of a non-profit is only five years. **We attribute our endurance to two things. Hard work by our board and our small paid staff, and the fact that this work is never done.**

We have fought many battles and won several important ones, and the people of Utah have benefitted greatly from those victories. But every time one problem is put to rest or addressed, another, new one takes its place. The saying goes that environmental victories are often only temporary, but the defeats are usually permanent.

That brings us to our current situation. **There is no point in trying to hide that the political atmosphere in this country and in this state has become hostile to science, empirical evidence, and reality itself.** Our President is notoriously ignorant and disrespectful of basic scientific facts, and he has filled his cabinet with people who are profoundly unqualified and uninterested in protecting our environment, our climate and your health. **We have long been at odds with the priorities of the Utah legislature, but the attitude emanating from the White House seems to have spread to Utah and emboldened our lawmakers to be even more disdainful of the need for clean air, clean water, clean energy, climate mitigation, and protecting the Great Salt Lake.**

This means UPHE must turn increasingly to the courts to shape public policy that better protects the common good and your health. And it means that if the public interest is to be preserved, groups like UPHE become more important than ever before. Our annual report shows that, out of necessity, lawsuits have become increasingly central to our activism. Even with attorneys offering us steep discounts from typical legal fees, this strategy can be expensive. So raising money will be more and more important. We greatly appreciate everyone who has helped us financially and otherwise make our legal efforts possible.

We will leave no stone unturned and spare no effort to keep science, common sense, and your family's health and well being at the forefront of Utah policy.

Brian Moench, M.D.
President and Co-founder



Mission Statement

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.

In 2007, UPHE began working for a healthy environment in Utah because we knew the voice of medical science was badly needed in the quest to preserve a livable future for all of us. We don't just speak truth to power; we work to give real power to scientific truth. We educate, advocate, and when necessary, litigate to protect your health and our future.

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. Here are some of the things we have worked on in 2024 on behalf of you and your family.

Year in Review

We educate, we advocate, and when necessary, we litigate.

In 2024, we did all three. Check out some of the highlights from last year.

January

People's Great Salt Lake Rally –
Hundreds gathered to demand action for Great Salt Lake, calling for policies to protect this critical ecosystem.

February

Good Neighbor Press Conference –
We stood alongside impacted communities, advocating for stronger air quality protections against industrial pollution. Dr. Brian Moench spoke.

March

Save the Phalaropes Rally – Dr. Sara Johnson spoke at a powerful demonstration highlighting the plight of migratory birds dependent on the shrinking Great Salt Lake.

April

Brain Awareness Week at Weber State –
Dr. Courtney Henley presented, educating students and the public about the neurological impacts of air pollution.

May

Weber Inland Port Rally –
Community members and advocates united against the inland port expansion, raising concerns about pollution and public health.

June

Documentary Filming –
UPHE Team filmed for an upcoming documentary about Great Salt Lake at Antelope Island.



Reddit Ask Me Anything –
Engaged with thousands online, answering questions about air quality, Great Salt Lake, and environmental health.





July

Weber County Info & Listening Session – We co-hosted a community discussion on the inland port's impact, gathering input and empowering local voices.



August

Call to Action – We called for a continuation and expansion of Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) to protect the health of local radiation victims.

September

Lawsuit Update – UPHE & partners filed a **lawsuit against the Utah Inland Port Authority (UIPA)** claiming that the structure of UIPA's board was unconstitutional because of an issue with the separation of powers.

Great Salt Lake Summit – Experts, advocates, and community leaders convened to strategize solutions for saving the lake. Dr. Brian Moench and Executive Director, Jonny Vasic, hosted an engaging session on how to write a great op-ed or letter to the editor.

October

Parley's Canyon Protections – UPHE submitted technical comments to DAQ about Parley's mine and held a town hall for residents about the dangers of the proposed mine at the Patagonia outlet.

PFAS in Pesticides Press Conference – UPHE's doctors, Brian Moench, Kirtly Parker Jones, Sean Slack and Sara Johnson exposed the presence of toxic "forever chemicals" in pesticides used throughout Utah. We then sent a letter to hundreds of state officials urging them to take action and protect residents.

November

Great Salt Lake Watershed Symposium – Shared insights on water conservation and climate resilience in the face of Utah's growing water crisis. UPHE's Dr. Brian Moench gave a presentation on Great Salt Lake's connection to human health.



December

UIPA Press Conference – Challenged the Utah Inland Port Authority's environmental impact, advocating for transparency and accountability.

Priority Issues

In 2024, **UPHE fought tirelessly to protect the air, water, and health of Utah residents from powerful industries and harmful policies.**

We took legal action to hold the state accountable for the survival of Great Salt Lake, stood up against a massive gravel pit threatening Parley's Canyon, and pushed back against unchecked inland port development that would flood our communities with pollution. We exposed the dangers of PFAS contamination, championed stronger air quality protections, and advocated for better oversight of industrial polluters.

Through every battle, we remained a leading voice for public health and environmental justice, ensuring Utahns have clean air to breathe, safe water to drink, and a healthier future.

Inland Port



Great Salt Lake



Parley's Canyon



Litigation



Education & Advocacy



Inland Port

Our 2024 Advocacy & Action

Litigation: Our challenge of the legality of the Utah Inland Port board is already resulting in a reorganization effort.

Wetlands Report: UPHE provided air quality expertise and co-authored a wetlands report.

Stop the Polluting Port Press Conferences: UPHE docs spoke at multiple press conferences to provide air quality and medical expertise.

Weber Inland Port: Because of the dramatic impact on Great Salt Lake wetlands of this particular port, we spent a lot of time organizing, speaking on and hosting a listening session for the Weber County community.



The Utah Inland Port Authority (UIPA) continues to push forward with a massive freight and warehouse development, promising economic growth but ignoring the severe health costs. They've expanded to 11 project areas across the state in addition to their original Salt Lake location. Increased truck traffic, diesel trains, and industrial sprawl will significantly worsen Utah's already dangerous air pollution levels.

Air Quality & Health Impacts

Diesel exhaust is one of the most toxic sources of air pollution, classified as a known **carcinogen**. The inland port would dramatically increase fine particulate matter (PM2.5), nitrogen oxides, and ozone-forming pollutants, contributing to asthma, heart disease, and early mortality.



Great Salt Lake

Saving Great Salt Lake is first and foremost a public health imperative, and this is why UPHE is at the forefront of this fight.

The state's attempt to have our lawsuit thrown out was unsuccessful!

The shrinking and potential disappearance of Great Salt Lake is the most important environmental issue and public health threat in Utah's history. Dust storms from dried up lakes around the world have devastating public health consequences to near-by populations. We can't allow that to happen in Utah, and that's what prompted our lawsuit against the state.

Our 2024 Advocacy & Action

Legal Action: We continued our legal efforts to force state leaders to address the root causes of water depletion. The state attempted to have our lawsuit thrown out, unsuccessfully, so we're continuing to work on this important issue.

People's Great Salt Lake Rally: We joined thousands of Utahns demanding urgent action to save the lake and protect public health. UPHE's Dr. Courtney Henley gave a powerful speech.

Great Salt Lake Summit: We co-sponsored the summit where we convened experts, policymakers, and community members to discuss solutions.

Great Salt Lake Watershed Symposium: Dr. Brian Moench co hosted a presentation, highlighting the public health reasons for water conservation and stronger policies to restore the lake.



Sign the petition!



Air Quality & Health Impacts

Toxic dust from the lakebed increases fine particulate pollution (PM10 and PM2.5), which is linked to **lung disease, heart attacks, strokes, and premature death**. The dust also contains dangerous heavy metals, posing long-term risks to **neurological health and childhood development**.

Great Salt Lake is Utah's premier natural resource, and an irreplaceable hemispheric ecosystem. It provides **habitat for over 10 MILLION MIGRATORY BIRDS OF 338 SPECIES.**

Allowing the lake to continue to shrivel up will decrease precipitation. The increasing dust **accelerates snow melt in the Wasatch Mountains**. This creates a two-pronged downward spiral to critical Wasatch Front water resources.

But the state's attitude threatens all of us. We were stunned when the state's attorneys admitted in court that the state's position is Utah water rights law is supreme to all other constitutional and legal obligations, and if honoring those water rights eventually causes the lake to disappear, then so be it. The public cannot tolerate such a callous and extreme position.



Parley's Canyon

THE HEALTH OF 139,000 PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN A 3-MILE RADIUS OF PARLEY'S CANYON IS AT RISK.

Sign the petition!



Parley's Canyon is the iconic eastern gateway to our Capital city, and the heart of the Wasatch Mountains we all hold dear. Already the canyon is often blanketed with dust from the existing mine. But a new, proposed mine threatens our air and water quality, and Parley's would never be the same.

OUR 2024 ADVOCACY & ACTION

Policy Efforts: With the help of our supporters, we helped turn a bill that would have greenlit the mine into a study to determine the need. The study found that we have enough aggregate for 10-20 years along the Wasatch Front, so there is no need for the new mine. It also suggested the decision making should lean heavily on local representatives of the impacted communities, which the legislature has been fighting.

Parley's Canyon Info Session at Patagonia: We educated the public about the mine's risks and mobilized opposition.

Legal Efforts: We anticipate the DAQ issuing a permit for the mine, and we're prepared with a legal challenge if and when that happens.

AIR QUALITY & HEALTH IMPACTS

The fine particulate pollution (PM2.5 and PM10) generated by blasting, crushing, and truck traffic is dangerous for **lung health**, particularly for children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing conditions. Diesel emissions from heavy machinery and transport trucks are also a **known carcinogen**, increasing risks of **respiratory disease and heart failure**.



Litigation

LITIGATION IS ONE OF THE MANY TOOLS UPHE USES TO PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH FROM THE THREATS OF AIR POLLUTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION.

GREAT SALT LAKE

We don't have to guess what will happen if we allow Great Salt Lake to continue to shrivel up. Forty years of research has documented the severe health hazards of air pollution of all types. But research specific to communities exposed to dust from dried up lake beds, laced with multiple types of toxins, shows it causes all those hazards and then some. This is why we are involved with a lawsuit to hold the state of Utah accountable for raising lake levels under the Public Trust Doctrine, which would help establish a minimum lake level of 4,198 feet above sea level.

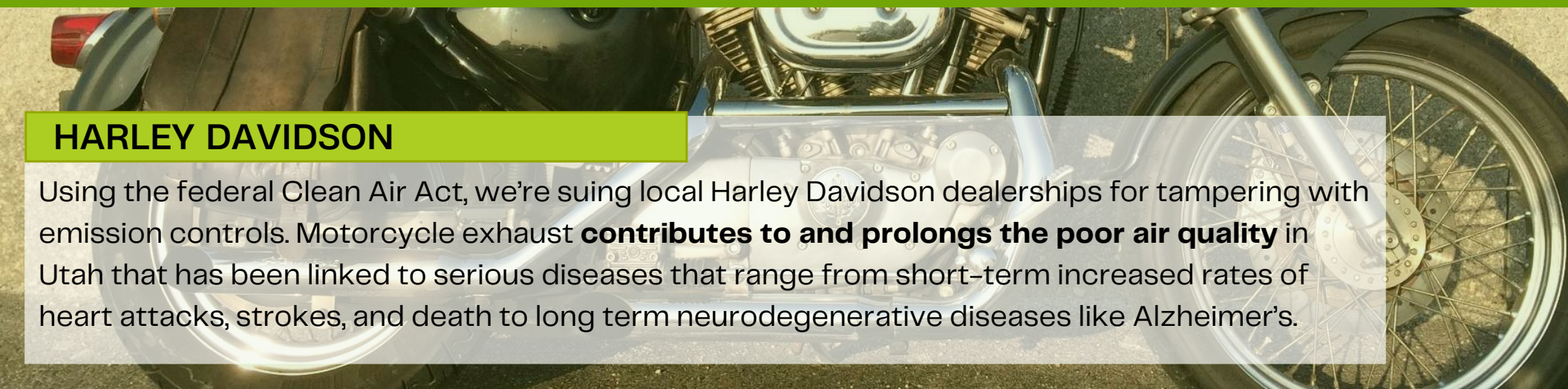
UTAH INLAND PORT

UPHE joined The Center for Biological Diversity in suing Utah Governor Spencer Cox and state legislative leaders to challenge the Utah Inland Port Authority as unconstitutional under the state's principle of separation of powers.

This lawsuit aims to reverse the Utah Port Authority's disastrous record of using public money to fast-track massive industrial development that's accelerating the collapse of the Great Salt Lake ecosystem. The port authority and its board have consistently prioritized the interests of private developers over protecting people and the environment. There's too high a cost to our fragile Great Salt Lake and the communities, plants and animals that depend on it.

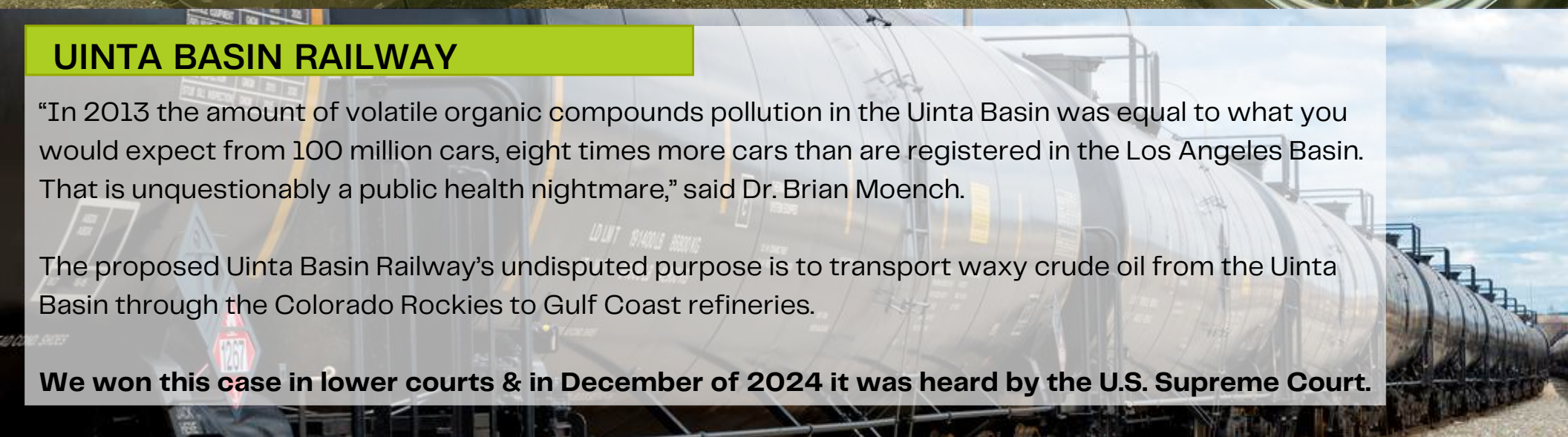
Litigation

UPHE IS WORKING HARD ON THE FRONTLINES EVERYDAY TO SAFEGUARD UTAH'S ENVIRONMENT, YOUR FAMILY'S HEALTH, AND THE LEGACY AND QUALITY OF LIFE WE LEAVE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.



HARLEY DAVIDSON

Using the federal Clean Air Act, we're suing local Harley Davidson dealerships for tampering with emission controls. Motorcycle exhaust **contributes to and prolongs the poor air quality** in Utah that has been linked to serious diseases that range from short-term increased rates of heart attacks, strokes, and death to long term neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's.



UINTA BASIN RAILWAY

"In 2013 the amount of volatile organic compounds pollution in the Uinta Basin was equal to what you would expect from 100 million cars, eight times more cars than are registered in the Los Angeles Basin. That is unquestionably a public health nightmare," said Dr. Brian Moench.

The proposed Uinta Basin Railway's undisputed purpose is to transport waxy crude oil from the Uinta Basin through the Colorado Rockies to Gulf Coast refineries.

We won this case in lower courts & in December of 2024 it was heard by the U.S. Supreme Court.

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE UTAH A SAFER, CLEANER, HEALTHIER PLACE FOR EVERYONE, AND PRESERVE A MORE LIVABLE CLIMATE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS. THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY AND WILLINGNESS TO HELP IN THIS IMPORTANT EFFORT.

Education and Presentations

This year, our team delivered impactful presentations in schools across Utah, engaging students with science-based insights into air quality, climate change, and environmental toxins.

We take a proactive approach to education, **ensuring that the next generation understands the critical connections between environmental health and public well-being.** By bringing our specialized expertise in medicine and public health directly into classrooms, we provided young minds with the knowledge and tools to protect themselves and their communities from environmental hazards.

Beyond the classroom, UPHE expanded our reach through **community presentations** that informed and empowered audiences of all ages. Whether speaking to boards, communities, or local organizations, **our experts translated complex environmental health topics into accessible, actionable information.** Through these efforts, we helped individuals and families make informed decisions that contribute to healthier homes, schools, and workplaces.



Forever Chemicals in Pesticides

Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), commonly known as "forever chemicals," are **toxic pollutants that persist in the environment** and accumulate in the human body. Long associated with contaminated water, PFAS are now being detected in pesticides, industrial emissions, and even the air we breathe.

Our 2024 Advocacy & Action

PFAS in Pesticides Press Conference: We exposed the presence of PFAS in widely used pesticides, calling for regulatory action.

Policy Advocacy: We pushed for stronger regulations on pesticides as far as PFAS are concerned, sending a letter outlining our concerns to hundreds of state officials, and garnered some interest in legislative action.

Public Education: We informed Utahns about PFAS risks and ways to limit exposure through household choices and advocacy.



Air Quality & Health Impacts

UPHE has long called attention to harmful pesticide spraying from the Mosquito Abatement Districts across the state. Now that so much research has emerged about PFAS in pesticides, the threat is even more serious. These chemicals attach to fine particles, traveling far from their source and infiltrating homes, schools, and workplaces.

These chemicals are linked to cancer, hormone disruption, immune disorders, and birth defects.



Forest Burning

UPHE is an organization of health care professionals concerned about the adverse impacts of environmental degradation on public health.

We became concerned about the human health consequences of smoke from intentional, or prescribed and slash pile burns, when supporters showed us pictures and videos of what state and federal agencies are doing in the Wasatch Mountains.

We are not forest ecologists. However, in the era of an accelerating climate crisis and an obvious global wildfire epidemic, how forests are managed has become a major public health issue, and for that reason we were compelled to investigate the issue and to take a position. And as with medical research, we strive to align that position with the best science and the opinions of the most trustworthy experts.

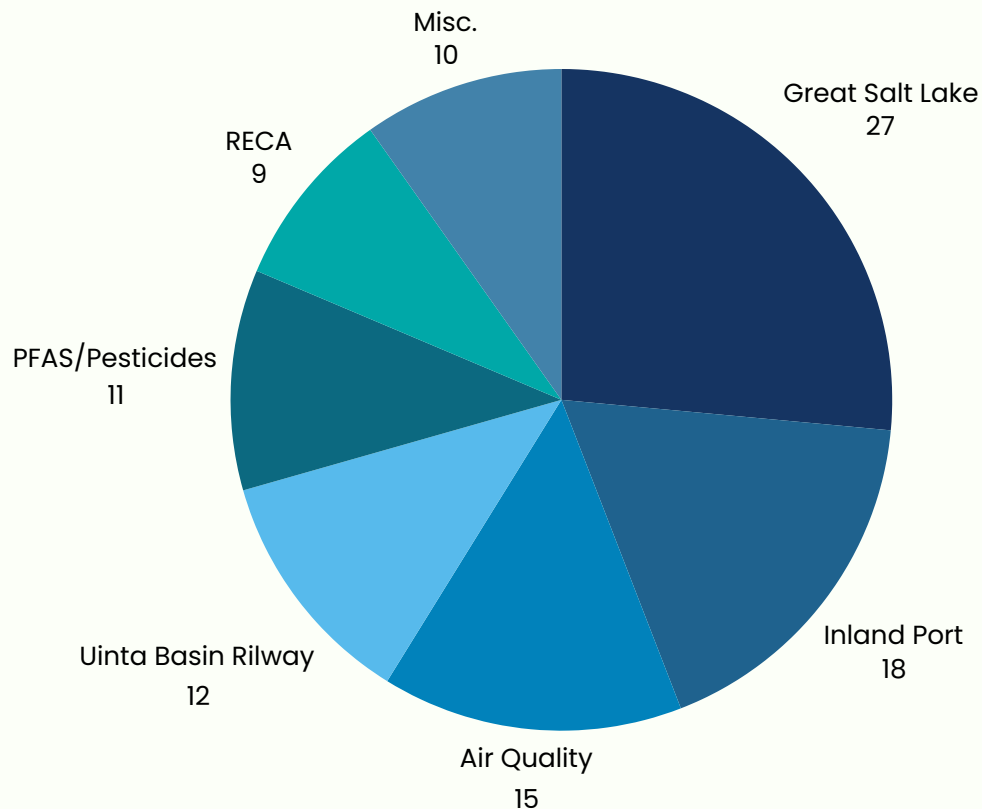
**More
information
& sources!**



In 2024, the Forest Service hosted a webinar series explaining their forest management techniques. Feeling that the webinar series was omitting important information and studies on how their practices could be **harming public health**, UPHE collaborated on the John Muir Project's rebuttals.

UPHE in the NEWS

In 2024, UPHE continued to be a leading voice in the fight for clean air, water, and a healthier future for Utahns. We are proud to be a trusted source of information, recognized and referenced by 35 news outlets in 2024. Dr. Brian Moench was quoted nearly 60 times this year on a variety of issues relating to public health and environmental health.



We covered a broad range of topics, all under the umbrella of our mission, including RECA protections for radiation victims, Great Salt Lake, local mining operations, broader climate implications, and so much more.



Social Media Highlight

UPHE uses social media to connect with our supporters, share important updates, and mobilize action.

Our platforms provide a great way to stay informed about events, advocacy efforts, and ways to get involved. This year, we've expanded our reach by engaging new audiences across multiple social media channels, helping to raise awareness and amplify our impact.

102 News Features!

398 Facebook & Instagram posts



OUR TEAM



Staff

Jonny Vasic, Executive Director
& Brandi O'Brien, Manager of
Programs & Development



Alexa Peseri
Outreach Coordinator



Yasmine El-Hage
Community Engagement &
Outreach Coordinator

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Brian Moench, M.D.
President & cofounder



**Kirtly Parker Jones,
M.D.**
Vice President



Scott Pynes
Treasurer



Janice Evans



Mark Goldfarb, M.D.
Climate Ambassador



**Courtney Henley,
M.D.**



**Sara E. H.
Johnson, M.D.**



**Richard Kanner,
M.D.**



**John MacFarlane,
M.D.**



**E. Thomas
Nelson, M.D.**



Sean Slack, M.D.



**Robert Weir,
M.D.**

Coalitions & Community Partners



Stop the Polluting Port



Pesticide Working Group



Protect Great Salt Lake Coalition



Protect Parley's Coalition



Founding Member of the Utah Lead Coalition



Regional Haze



Utah Clean Infrastructure Coalition



Utah State Affiliate and Member of Medical Society Consortium on Climate & Health



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

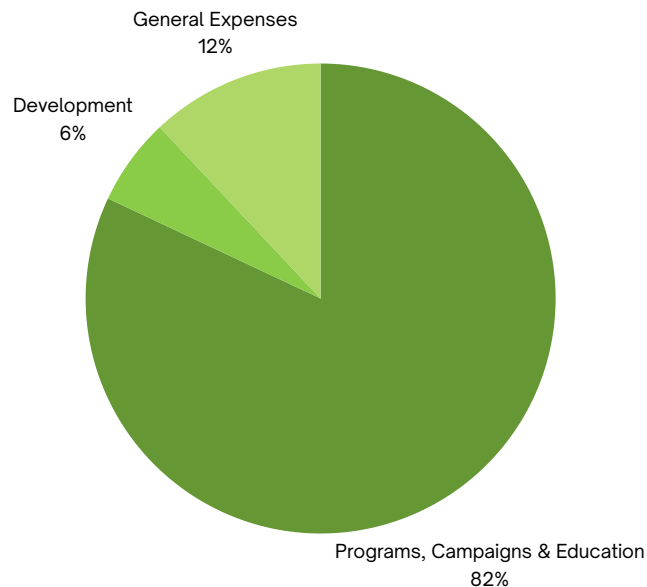


Sierra Club Utah
Stewardship Utah
Utah Citizens Advocating Renewable Energy (UCARE)
Westside Coalition
Western Resource Advocates
Utah Valley Earth Forum
U of U - Sustainability Office
Utah Tar Sands Resistance
Utah Rivers Council
Utah Moms for Clean Air

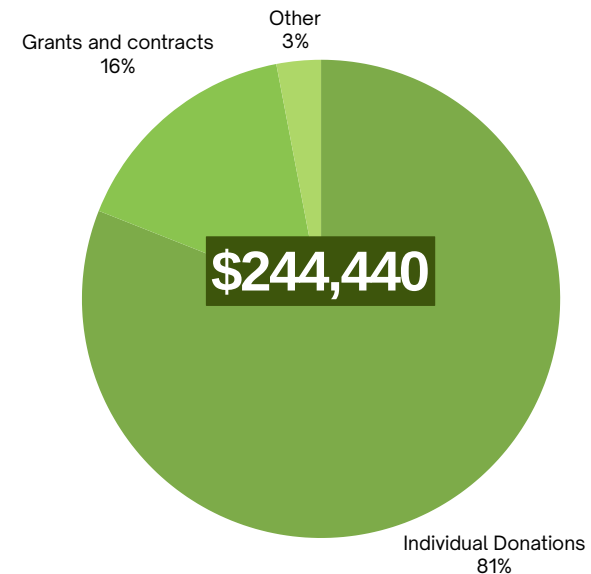
UPHE's Resource Allocation

We are so grateful for our wonderful supporters who keep us fighting for the health of Utah & its residents! 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



Funding Sources



Contact Us



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



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www.uphe.org



A great way to hear about and even watch live events you weren't able to make in person



A visual guide to our priority issues



Blue Sky

Short and simple actions and comments

Substack

Longer in depth commentary

Join us in our mission to ensure a healthy environment for all Utahns.

Your support as a member, starting at just \$25, helps us advocate for policies and practices that protect our environment. Become a member today and be a part of the solution for a healthier, cleaner future.

Together, we can make a difference.

Become a member!



