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WATER MODIFICATIONS

2024 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Scott D. Sandall

House Sponsor: Casey Snider

LONG TITLE

Committee Note:

The Legislative Water Development Commission recommended this bill.

Membership: 13 legislators 11 non-legislators

Total Vote: 6 voting for 1 voting against 6 absent

Legislative Vote: 6 voting for 1 voting against 6 absent

Casey Snider General Description:

This bill addresses regulation of water.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- ▶ modifies forfeiture provisions in relation to saved water;
- ▶ grants rulemaking authority related to saved water;
- ▶ defines terms;
- ▶ addresses changes to a water right in relation to saved water;
- ▶ provides for proofs related to saved water;
- ▶ addresses certificates of appropriation in relation to saved water;
- ▶ modifies provisions related to segregation and saved water;
- ▶ clarifies language related to agricultural water optimization and saved water;
- ▶ repeals certain language related to agricultural water optimization; and
- ▶ makes technical changes.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:



28 None

29 **Other Special Clauses:**

30 None

31 **Utah Code Sections Affected:**

32 AMENDS:

33 73-1-4, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapter 230

34 73-2-1, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapter 16

35 73-3-3, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2022, Chapter 43

36 73-3-8, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapter 253

37 73-3-16, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2021, Chapter 81

38 73-3-17, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2020, Chapter 278

39 73-3-27, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2009, Chapter 247

40 73-10g-203.5, as enacted by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapter 261

41 73-10g-206, as enacted by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapter 261

42 REPEALS:

43 73-10g-208, as enacted by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapter 261



45 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

46 Section 1. Section 73-1-4 is amended to read:

47 **73-1-4. Reversion to the public by abandonment or forfeiture for nonuse within**
48 **seven years -- Saved water -- Nonuse application.**

49 (1) As used in this section:

50 (a) "Public entity" means:

51 (i) the United States;

52 (ii) an agency of the United States;

53 (iii) the state;

54 (iv) a state agency;

55 (v) a political subdivision of the state; or

56 (vi) an agency of a political subdivision of the state.

57 (b) "Public water supplier" means an entity that:

58 (i) supplies water, directly or indirectly, to the public for municipal, domestic, or

59 industrial use; and
60 (ii) is:
61 (A) a public entity;
62 (B) a water corporation, as defined in Section 54-2-1, that is regulated by the Public
63 Service Commission;
64 (C) a community water system:
65 (I) that:
66 (Aa) supplies water to at least 100 service connections used by year-round residents; or
67 (Bb) regularly serves at least 200 year-round residents; and
68 (II) whose voting members:
69 (Aa) own a share in the community water system;
70 (Bb) receive water from the community water system in proportion to the member's
71 share in the community water system; and
72 (Cc) pay the rate set by the community water system based on the water the member
73 receives; or
74 (D) a water users association:
75 (I) in which one or more public entities own at least 70% of the outstanding shares; and
76 (II) that is a local sponsor of a water project constructed by the United States Bureau of
77 Reclamation.
78 (c) "Saved water" means the same as that term is defined in Section 73-3-3.
79 ~~(d)~~ (d) "Shareholder" means the same as that term is defined in Section 73-3-3.5.
80 ~~(e)~~ (e) "Water company" means the same as that term is defined in Section 73-3-3.5.
81 ~~(f)~~ (f) "Water supply entity" means an entity that supplies water as a utility service or
82 for irrigation purposes and is also:
83 (i) a municipality, water conservancy district, metropolitan water district, irrigation
84 district, or other public agency;
85 (ii) a water company regulated by the Public Service Commission; or
86 (iii) any other owner of a community water system.
87 (2) (a) Except as provided in Subsection (2)(b) or (e), when an appropriator or the
88 appropriator's successor in interest abandons or ceases to beneficially use all or a portion of a
89 water right for a period of at least seven years, the water right or the unused portion of that

90 water right is subject to forfeiture in accordance with Subsection (2)(c).

91 (b) (i) An appropriator or the appropriator's successor in interest may file an
92 application for nonuse with the state engineer.

93 (ii) A nonuse application may be filed on all or a portion of the water right, including
94 water rights held by a water company.

95 (iii) After giving written notice to the water company, a shareholder may file a nonuse
96 application with the state engineer on the water represented by the stock.

97 (iv) (A) The approval of a nonuse application excuses the requirement of beneficial use
98 of water from the date of filing.

99 (B) The time during which an approved nonuse application is in effect does not count
100 toward the seven-year period described in Subsection (2)(a).

101 (v) The filing or approval of a nonuse application or a series of nonuse applications
102 under Subsection (3) does not:

103 (A) constitute beneficial use of a water right;

104 (B) protect a water right that is already subject to forfeiture under this section; or

105 (C) bar a water right owner from:

106 (I) using the water under the water right as permitted under the water right; or

107 (II) claiming the benefit of Subsection (2)(e) or any other forfeiture defense provided
108 by law.

109 (c) (i) Except as provided in Subsection (2)(c)(ii), a water right or a portion of the
110 water right may not be forfeited unless a judicial action to declare the right forfeited is
111 commenced:

112 (A) within 15 years from the end of the latest period of nonuse of at least seven years;
113 or

114 (B) within the combined time of 15 years from the end of the most recent period of
115 nonuse of at least seven years and the time the water right was subject to one or more nonuse
116 applications.

117 (ii) (A) The state engineer, in a proposed determination of rights filed with the court
118 and prepared in accordance with Section [73-4-11](#), may not assert that a water right was
119 forfeited unless the most recent period of nonuse of seven years ends or occurs:

120 (I) during the 15 years immediately preceding the day on which the state engineer files

121 the proposed determination of rights with the court; or

122 (II) during the combined time immediately preceding the day on which the state
123 engineer files the proposed determination of rights consisting of 15 years and the time the
124 water right was subject to one or more approved nonuse applications.

125 (B) After the day on which a proposed determination of rights is filed with the court a
126 person may not assert that a water right subject to that determination was forfeited before the
127 issuance of the proposed determination, unless the state engineer asserts forfeiture in the
128 proposed determination, or a person, in accordance with Section 73-4-11, makes an objection
129 to the proposed determination that asserts forfeiture.

130 (iii) A water right, found to be valid in a decree entered in an action for general
131 determination of rights under Chapter 4, Determination of Water Rights, is subject to a claim
132 of forfeiture based on a seven-year period of nonuse that begins after the day on which the state
133 engineer filed the related proposed determination of rights with the court, unless the decree
134 provides otherwise.

135 (iv) If in a judicial action a court declares a water right forfeited, on the date on which
136 the water right is forfeited:

137 (A) the right to beneficially use the water reverts to the public; and

138 (B) the water made available by the forfeiture:

139 (I) first, satisfies other water rights in the hydrologic system in order of priority date;
140 and

141 (II) second, may be appropriated as provided in this title.

142 (d) Except as provided in Subsection (2)(e), this section applies whether the unused or
143 abandoned water or a portion of the water is:

144 (i) permitted to run to waste; or

145 (ii) beneficially used by others without right with the knowledge of the water right
146 holder.

147 (e) This section does not apply to:

148 (i) the beneficial use of water according to a written, terminable lease or other
149 agreement with the appropriator or the appropriator's successor in interest;

150 (ii) a water right if its place of use is contracted under an approved state agreement or
151 federal conservation fallowing program;

- 152 (iii) those periods of time when a surface water or groundwater source fails to yield
- 153 sufficient water to satisfy the water right;
- 154 (iv) a water right when water is unavailable because of the water right's priority date;
- 155 (v) a water right to store water in a surface reservoir, or an aquifer in accordance with
- 156 ~~[Title 73, Chapter 3b, Groundwater Recharge and Recovery Act]~~ Chapter 3b, Groundwater
- 157 Recharge and Recovery Act, if the water is stored for present or future beneficial use;
- 158 (vi) a water right if a water user has beneficially used substantially all of the water right
- 159 within a seven-year period, provided that this exemption does not apply to the adjudication of a
- 160 water right in a general determination of water rights under Chapter 4, Determination of Water
- 161 Rights;
- 162 (vii) except as provided by Subsection (2)(g), a water right:
- 163 (A) (I) owned by a public water supplier;
- 164 (II) represented by a public water supplier's ownership interest in a water company; or
- 165 (III) to which a public water supplier owns the right of beneficial use; and
- 166 (B) conserved or held for the reasonable future water requirement of the public, which
- 167 is determined according to Subsection (2)(f);
- 168 (viii) a supplemental water right during a period of time when another water right
- 169 available to the appropriator or the appropriator's successor in interest provides sufficient water
- 170 so as to not require beneficial use of the supplemental water right;
- 171 (ix) a period of nonuse of a water right during the time the water right is subject to an
- 172 approved change application where the applicant is diligently pursuing certification;
- 173 (x) a water right to store water in a surface reservoir if:
- 174 (A) storage is limited by a safety, regulatory, or engineering restraint that the
- 175 appropriator or the appropriator's successor in interest cannot reasonably correct; and
- 176 (B) not longer than seven years have elapsed since the limitation described in
- 177 Subsection (2)(e)(x)(A) is imposed; ~~[or]~~
- 178 (xi) a water right subject to an approved change application for use within a water bank
- 179 that has been authorized but not dissolved under Chapter 31, Water Banking Act, during the
- 180 period of time the state engineer authorizes the water right to be used within the water bank[-];
- 181 or
- 182 (xii) subject to Subsection (2)(h), that portion of a water right that is quantified as

183 saved water in a final order from the state engineer approving a change application, but not to
184 exceed the amount subsequently verified by the state engineer in a certificate issued under
185 Section 73-3-17.

186 (f) (i) The reasonable future water requirement of the public is the amount of water
187 needed in the next 40 years by:

188 (A) the persons within the public water supplier's reasonably anticipated service area
189 based on reasonably anticipated population growth; or

190 (B) other water use demand.

191 (ii) For purposes of Subsection (2)(f)(i), a community water system's reasonably
192 anticipated service area:

193 (A) is the area served by the community water system's distribution facilities; and

194 (B) expands as the community water system expands the distribution facilities in
195 accordance with Title 19, Chapter 4, Safe Drinking Water Act.

196 (iii) The state engineer shall by rule made in accordance with Subsection 73-2-1(4)
197 establish standards for a written plan that may be presented as evidence in conformance with
198 this Subsection (2)(f), except that before a rule establishing standards for a written plan under
199 this Subsection (2)(f) takes effect, in addition to complying with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah
200 Administrative Rulemaking Act, the state engineer shall present the rule to:

201 (A) if the Legislature is not in session, the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and
202 Environment Interim Committee; or

203 (B) if the Legislature is in session, the House of Representatives and Senate Natural
204 Resources, Agriculture, and Environment standing committees.

205 (g) For a water right acquired by a public water supplier on or after May 5, 2008,
206 Subsection (2)(e)(vii) applies if:

207 (i) the public water supplier submits a change application under Section 73-3-3; and

208 (ii) the state engineer approves the change application.

209 (h) Saved water does not retain the protection of Subsection (2)(e)(xii) and any period
210 of nonuse for saved water begins to run the day on which:

211 (i) the underlying water right that serves as the basis for the saved water is declared by
212 court decree to have been lost due to forfeiture under this section; or

213 (ii) the title of a right to saved water segregated under Section 73-3-27 is conveyed

214 independent of the underlying water right.

215 (3) (a) The state engineer shall furnish a nonuse application form requiring the
216 following information:

217 (i) the name and address of the applicant;

218 (ii) a description of the water right or a portion of the water right, including the point of
219 diversion, place of use, and priority;

220 (iii) the quantity of water;

221 (iv) the period of use;

222 (v) the extension of time applied for;

223 (vi) a statement of the reason for the nonuse of the water; and

224 (vii) any other information that the state engineer requires.

225 (b) (i) Upon receipt of the application, the state engineer shall publish a notice of the
226 application once a week for two successive weeks:

227 (A) in a newspaper of general circulation in the county in which the source of the water
228 supply is located and where the water is to be beneficially used; and

229 (B) as required in Section 45-1-101.

230 (ii) The notice shall:

231 (A) state that an application has been made; and

232 (B) specify where the interested party may obtain additional information relating to the
233 application.

234 (c) An interested person may file a written protest with the state engineer against the
235 granting of the application:

236 (i) within 20 days after the notice is published, if the adjudicative proceeding is
237 informal; and

238 (ii) within 30 days after the notice is published, if the adjudicative proceeding is
239 formal.

240 (d) In a proceeding to determine whether the nonuse application should be approved or
241 rejected, the state engineer shall follow Title 63G, Chapter 4, Administrative Procedures Act.

242 (e) After further investigation, the state engineer may approve or reject the application.

243 (4) (a) The state engineer shall grant a nonuse application on all or a portion of a water
244 right for a period of time not exceeding seven years if the applicant shows a reasonable cause

245 for nonuse.

246 (b) A reasonable cause for nonuse includes:

247 (i) a demonstrable financial hardship or economic depression;

248 (ii) a physical cause or change that renders use beyond the reasonable control of the
249 water right owner so long as the water right owner acts with reasonable diligence to resume or
250 restore the use;

251 (iii) the initiation of water conservation or an efficiency practice, or the operation of a
252 groundwater recharge recovery program approved by the state engineer;

253 (iv) operation of a legal proceeding;

254 (v) the holding of a water right or stock in a mutual water company without use by a
255 water supply entity to meet the reasonable future requirements of the public;

256 (vi) situations where, in the opinion of the state engineer, the nonuse would assist in
257 implementing an existing, approved water management plan; or

258 (vii) the loss of capacity caused by deterioration of the water supply or delivery
259 equipment if the applicant submits, with the application, a specific plan to resume full use of
260 the water right by replacing, restoring, or improving the equipment.

261 (5) (a) Sixty days before the expiration of a nonuse application, the state engineer shall
262 notify the applicant by mail or by a form of electronic communication through which receipt is
263 verifiable, of the date when the nonuse application will expire.

264 (b) An applicant may file a subsequent nonuse application in accordance with this
265 section.

266 Section 2. Section **73-2-1** is amended to read:

267 **73-2-1. State engineer -- Term -- Powers and duties -- Qualification for duties.**

268 (1) There shall be a state engineer.

269 (2) The state engineer shall:

270 (a) be appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate;

271 (b) hold office for the term of four years and until a successor is appointed; and

272 (c) have five years experience as a practical engineer or the theoretical knowledge,
273 practical experience, and skill necessary for the position.

274 (3) (a) The state engineer shall be responsible for the general administrative
275 supervision of the waters of the state and the measurement, appropriation, apportionment, and

276 distribution of those waters.

277 (b) The state engineer may secure the equitable apportionment and distribution of the
278 water according to the respective rights of appropriators.

279 (4) The state engineer shall make rules, in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah
280 Administrative Rulemaking Act, consistent with the purposes and provisions of this title,
281 regarding:

282 (a) reports of water right conveyances;

283 (b) the construction of water wells and the licensing of water well drillers;

284 (c) dam construction and safety;

285 (d) the alteration of natural streams;

286 (e) geothermal resource conservation;

287 (f) enforcement orders and the imposition of fines and penalties;

288 (g) the duty of water; and

289 (h) standards for written plans of a public water supplier that may be presented as
290 evidence of reasonable future water requirements under Subsection 73-1-4(2)(f).

291 (5) The state engineer may make rules, in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah
292 Administrative Rulemaking Act, consistent with the purposes and provisions of this title,
293 governing:

294 (a) water distribution systems and water commissioners;

295 (b) water measurement and reporting;

296 (c) groundwater recharge and recovery;

297 (d) wastewater reuse;

298 (e) the form, content, and processing procedure for a claim under Section 73-5-13 to
299 surface or underground water that is not represented by a certificate of appropriation;

300 (f) the form and content of a proof submitted to the state engineer under Section
301 73-3-16;

302 (g) the determination of water rights;

303 (h) preferences of water rights under Section 73-3-21.5; [or]

304 (i) the form and content of applications and related documents, maps, and reports[-]; or

305 (j) the administration of saved water, as defined in Section 73-3-3, including:

306 (i) quantifying saved water;

- 307 (ii) reporting related to saved water;
308 (iii) verifying saved water;
309 (iv) segregating saved water; and
310 (v) the subsequent placement to beneficial use of saved water.
- 311 (6) The state engineer may bring suit in courts of competent jurisdiction to:
- 312 (a) enjoin the unlawful appropriation, diversion, and use of surface and underground
313 water without first seeking redress through the administrative process;
- 314 (b) prevent theft, waste, loss, or pollution of surface and underground waters;
- 315 (c) enable the state engineer to carry out the duties of the state engineer's office; and
- 316 (d) enforce administrative orders and collect fines and penalties.
- 317 (7) The state engineer may:
- 318 (a) upon request from the board of trustees of an irrigation district under Title 17B,
319 Chapter 2a, Part 5, Irrigation District Act, or another special district under Title 17B, Limited
320 Purpose Local Government Entities - Special Districts, or a special service district under Title
321 17D, Chapter 1, Special Service District Act, that operates an irrigation water system, cause a
322 water survey to be made of the lands proposed to be annexed to the district in order to
323 determine and allot the maximum amount of water that could be beneficially used on the land,
324 with a separate survey and allotment being made for each 40-acre or smaller tract in separate
325 ownership; and
- 326 (b) upon completion of the survey and allotment under Subsection (7)(a), file with the
327 district board a return of the survey and report of the allotment.
- 328 (8) (a) The state engineer may establish water distribution systems and define the water
329 distribution systems' boundaries.
- 330 (b) The water distribution systems shall be formed in a manner that:
- 331 (i) secures the best protection to the water claimants; and
- 332 (ii) is the most economical for the state to supervise.
- 333 (9) The state engineer may conduct studies of current and novel uses of water in the
334 state.
- 335 (10) Notwithstanding Subsection (4)(b), the state engineer may not on the basis of the
336 depth of a water production well exempt the water production well from regulation under this
337 title or rules made under this title related to the:

338 (a) drilling, constructing, deepening, repairing, renovating, cleaning, developing,
339 testing, disinfecting, or abandonment of a water production well; or

340 (b) installation or repair of a pump for a water production well.

341 Section 3. Section 73-3-3 is amended to read:

342 **73-3-3. Changes to a water right.**

343 (1) As used in this section:

344 (a) "Agricultural water optimization project" means a project that:

345 (i) accomplishes agricultural water optimization as defined in Section [73-10g-203.5](#);

346 and

347 (ii) generates saved water.

348 [~~(a)~~] (b) "Change" means a change to the:

349 (i) point of diversion;

350 (ii) place of use;

351 (iii) period of use;

352 (iv) nature of use; or

353 (v) storage of water.

354 [~~(b)~~] (c) "Fixed time change" means a change for a fixed period of time exceeding one
355 year and not exceeding 10 years, including a fixed time change described in Section [73-3-30](#).

356 (d) "Net decrease in depletion" means a net decrease in water consumed that is
357 accomplished by implementing an agricultural water optimization project under a perfected
358 water right.

359 (e) "Net reduction in diversion" means a net decrease in water diverted under a
360 perfected water right that is accomplished by implementing an agricultural water optimization
361 project.

362 [~~(e)~~] (f) "Permanent change" means a change, for an indefinite period of time,
363 including a permanent change described in Section [73-3-30](#).

364 [~~(d)~~] (g) "Person entitled to the use of water" means:

365 (i) the holder of an approved but unperfected application to appropriate water;

366 (ii) the record owner of a perfected water right;

367 (iii) a person who has written authorization from a person described in Subsection

368 [~~(1)(d)(i) or (ii)~~] (1)(g)(i) or (ii) to file a change application on that person's behalf; or

369 (iv) a shareholder in a water company who is authorized to file a change application in
370 accordance with Section 73-3-3.5.

371 ~~[(e)]~~ (h) (i) "Quantity impairment" means any reduction in the amount of water a
372 person is able to receive in order to satisfy an existing right to the use of water that would result
373 from an action proposed in a change application, including:

374 (A) diminishing the quantity of water in the source of supply for the existing right;

375 (B) a change in the timing of availability of water from the source of supply for the
376 existing right; or

377 (C) enlarging the quantity of water depleted by the nature of the proposed use when
378 compared with the nature of the currently approved use.

379 (ii) "Quantity impairment" does not mean a decrease in the static level of water in an
380 underground basin or aquifer that would result from an action proposed to be taken in a change
381 application, if the volume of water necessary to satisfy an existing right otherwise remains
382 reasonably available.

383 (i) "Saved water" means:

384 (i) the net decrease in depletion or net reduction in diversion resulting from an
385 agricultural water optimization project as quantified by the state engineer in a final order
386 approving a change application filed under this section:

387 (A) on a perfected water right;

388 (B) issued before the commencement of physical construction of the agricultural water
389 optimization project; and

390 (C) describing the agricultural water optimization project and, as applicable, the net
391 decrease in depletion and net reduction in diversion; or

392 (ii) as applicable, the net decrease in depletion and net reduction in diversion
393 recognized in a certificate issued by the state engineer according to Section 73-3-17 after an
394 applicant has filed proof of appropriation on an approved change application described in
395 Subsection (3)(d).

396 ~~[(f)]~~ (j) "Split season change" means a change when the holder of a perfected right
397 grants to a water user the right to make sequential use of a portion of the water right.

398 ~~[(g)]~~ (k) "Temporary change" means a change for a period of time, not exceeding one
399 year, including a temporary change described in Section 73-3-30.

400 (2) (a) A person who proposes to file a change application may request consultation
401 with the state engineer, or the state engineer's designee, before filing the application to review
402 the requirements of the change application process, discuss potential issues related to the
403 change, and provide the applicant with information.

404 (b) Statements made and information presented in the consultation are not binding on
405 the applicant or the state engineer.

406 (c) The consultation described in Subsection (2)(a) may occur in the state engineer's
407 regional office for the region where the proposed change would occur.

408 (3) (a) A person entitled to the use of water may make a change to an existing right to
409 use water, including a right involved in a general determination of rights or other suit, if:

410 (i) the person makes the change in accordance with this section;

411 (ii) except as provided by Section 73-3-30, the change does not impair an existing right
412 without just compensation or adequate mitigation; and

413 (iii) the state engineer approves the change application, consistent with Section 73-3-8.

414 (b) A change application on a federal reclamation project water right shall be signed
415 by:

416 (i) the local water users organization that is contractually responsible for:

417 (A) the operation and maintenance of the project; or

418 (B) the repayment of project costs; and

419 (ii) the record owner of the water right.

420 (c) A change application on a United States Indian Irrigation Service water right that is
421 serving the needs of a township or municipality shall be signed by:

422 (i) the local public water supplier that is responsible for the operation and maintenance
423 of the public water supply system; and

424 (ii) the record owner of the water right.

425 (d) A person entitled to the use of water may file a change application on a perfected
426 water right to request the state engineer to:

427 (i) quantify saved water; or

428 (ii) subject to Section 73-3-8, allow beneficial use of saved water separate from the
429 underlying water right that serves as the basis of the saved water.

430 (4) (a) Before making a change, a person entitled to the use of water shall submit a

431 change application upon forms furnished by the state engineer.

432 (b) The application described in Subsection (4)(a) shall include:

433 (i) the applicant's name;

434 (ii) the water right description, including the water right number;

435 (iii) the water quantity;

436 (iv) the stream or water source;

437 (v) if applicable, the point on the stream or water source where the water is diverted;

438 (vi) if applicable, the point to which it is proposed to change the diversion of the water;

439 (vii) the place, nature, period, and extent of the currently approved use;

440 (viii) the place, nature, period, and extent of the proposed use;

441 (ix) if the change applicant is submitting a change application in accordance with

442 Section [73-3-3.5](#), the information required by Section [73-3-3.5](#);

443 (x) any proposed change to the storage of water; [~~and~~]

444 (xi) if the change application proposes to quantify saved water, the anticipated quantity
445 of saved water; and

446 [~~(xi)~~] (xii) any other information that the state engineer requires.

447 (c) A shareholder in a water company who seeks to make a change to a water right to
448 which the water company is the record owner shall file a change application in accordance with
449 Section [73-3-3.5](#).

450 (5) In a proceeding before the state engineer, the applicant has the burden of producing
451 evidence sufficient to support a reasonable belief that the change can be made in compliance
452 with this section and Section [73-3-8](#), including evidence:

453 (a) that the change will not cause a specific existing right to experience quantity
454 impairment; [~~or~~]

455 (b) if applicable, rebutting the presumption of quantity impairment described in
456 Subsection [73-3-8\(6\)\(c\)](#)[~~;~~]; and

457 (c) that, if the change application proposes to quantify saved water:

458 (i) the net decrease in depletion or net reduction in diversion can be reliably sustained
459 over the life of the agricultural water optimization project; and

460 (ii) an agricultural water optimization project proposing a net reduction in diversion
461 does not increase depletion allowed by the underlying perfected water right that serves as the

462 basis of the saved water.

463 (6) A change of an approved application to appropriate water does not:

464 (a) affect the priority of the original application to appropriate water; or

465 (b) extend the time period within which the construction of work is to begin or be

466 completed.

467 (7) Any person who makes a change without first filing and obtaining approval of a

468 change application providing for the change:

469 (a) (i) obtains no right by the change;

470 [~~(b)~~] (ii) is guilty of an offense punishable under Section 73-2-27 if the change is made

471 knowingly or intentionally; and

472 [~~(c)~~] (iii) shall comply with the change application process[-]; and

473 (b) obtains no right to saved water.

474 (8) (a) This section does not apply to the replacement of an existing well by a new well
475 drilled within a radius of 150 feet from the point of diversion of the existing well.

476 (b) A replacement well must be drilled in accordance with the requirements of Section
477 73-3-28.

478 Section 4. Section 73-3-8 is amended to read:

479 **73-3-8. Approval or rejection of application -- Requirements for approval --**

480 **Application for specified period of time -- Filing of royalty contract for removal of salt or**
481 **minerals -- Request for agency action.**

482 (1) (a) It shall be the duty of the state engineer to approve an application if there is
483 reason to believe that:

484 (i) for an application to appropriate, there is unappropriated water in the proposed
485 source;

486 (ii) the proposed use will not impair existing rights or interfere with the more
487 beneficial use of the water;

488 (iii) the proposed plan:

489 (A) is physically and economically feasible, unless the application is filed by the
490 United States Bureau of Reclamation; and

491 (B) would not prove detrimental to the public welfare;

492 (iv) the applicant has the financial ability to complete the proposed works;

493 (v) the application was filed in good faith and not for purposes of speculation or
494 monopoly; and

495 (vi) if applicable, the application complies with a groundwater management plan
496 adopted under Section 73-5-15.

497 (b) If the state engineer, because of information in the state engineer's possession
498 obtained either by the state engineer's own investigation or otherwise, has reason to believe that
499 an application will interfere with the water's more beneficial use for irrigation, municipal and
500 industrial, domestic or culinary, stock watering, power or mining development, or
501 manufacturing, or will unreasonably affect public recreation or the natural stream environment,
502 or will prove detrimental to the public welfare, the state engineer shall withhold approval or
503 rejection of the application until the state engineer has investigated the matter.

504 (c) If an application does not meet the requirements of this section, it shall be rejected.

505 (2) (a) An application to appropriate water for industrial, power, mining development,
506 manufacturing purposes, agriculture, or municipal purposes may be approved for a specific and
507 certain period from the time the water is placed to beneficial use under the application, but in
508 no event may an application be granted for a period of time less than that ordinarily needed to
509 satisfy the essential and primary purpose of the application or until the water is no longer
510 available as determined by the state engineer.

511 (b) At the expiration of the period fixed by the state engineer the water shall revert to
512 the public and is subject to appropriation as provided by this title.

513 (c) No later than 60 calendar days before the expiration date of the fixed time period,
514 the state engineer shall send notice by mail or by any form of electronic communication
515 through which receipt is verifiable, to the applicant of record.

516 (d) Except as provided by Subsection (2)(e), the state engineer may extend any limited
517 water right upon a showing that:

518 (i) the essential purpose of the original application has not been satisfied;

519 (ii) the need for an extension is not the result of any default or neglect by the applicant;

520 and

521 (iii) the water is still available.

522 (e) An extension may not exceed the time necessary to satisfy the primary purpose of
523 the original application.

524 (f) A request for extension of the fixed time period must be filed in writing in the
525 office of the state engineer on or before the expiration date of the application.

526 (3) (a) Before the approval of any application for the appropriation of water from
527 navigable lakes or streams of the state that contemplates the recovery of salts and other
528 minerals therefrom by precipitation or otherwise, the applicant shall file with the state engineer
529 a copy of a contract for the payment of royalties to the state.

530 (b) The approval of an application shall be revoked if the applicant fails to comply with
531 terms of the royalty contract.

532 (4) (a) The state engineer shall investigate all temporary change applications.

533 (b) The state engineer shall:

534 (i) approve the temporary change if the state engineer finds there is reason to believe
535 that the temporary change will not impair an existing right; and

536 (ii) deny the temporary change if the state engineer finds there is reason to believe the
537 temporary change would impair an existing right.

538 (5) (a) With respect to a change application for a permanent or fixed time change:

539 (i) the state engineer shall follow the same procedures provided in this title for
540 approving an application to appropriate water; and

541 (ii) the rights and duties of a change applicant are the same as the rights and duties of a
542 person who applies to appropriate water under this title.

543 (b) The state engineer may waive notice for a permanent or fixed time change
544 application if the application only involves a change in point of diversion of 660 feet or less.

545 (c) The state engineer may condition approval of a change application, including to:

546 (i) prevent an enlargement of the quantity of water depleted by the nature of the
547 proposed use when compared with the nature of the currently approved use of water proposed
548 to be changed[-]; and

549 (ii) ensure that the recognition and subsequent use of saved water, as defined in Section
550 73-3-3:

551 (A) is quantified, reported, and verified;

552 (B) does not lead to an enlargement of the depletion or diversion amounts in the
553 underlying water right that serves as the basis of the saved water, or an increase in the
554 authorized number of irrigated acres unless depletion is accounted for and regulated in the

555 condition;

556 (C) is limited to the net decrease in depletion and net reduction in diversion of the
557 underlying water right that serves as the basis of the saved water;

558 (D) is limited to the volume of water that will be sustained over time from the net
559 decrease in depletion or net reduction in diversion of the underlying water right that serves as
560 the basis of the saved water;

561 (E) does not violate an existing water agreement; and

562 (F) when based solely on a net reduction in diversion, the subsequent use is limited to
563 nonconsumptive beneficial uses and does not increase the depletion allowed by the underlying
564 water right that serves as the basis of the saved water or otherwise cause quantity impairment to
565 an existing water right when the saved water is beneficially used separate from the underlying
566 water right.

567 (d) [A] Except for an application proposing to quantify saved water, a condition
568 described in Subsection (5)(c) may not include a reduction in the currently approved diversion
569 rate of water under the water right identified in the change application solely to account for the
570 difference in depletion under the nature of the proposed use when compared with the nature of
571 the currently approved use.

572 (6) (a) Except as provided in Subsection (6)(b), the state engineer shall reject a
573 permanent or fixed time change application if the person proposing to make the change is
574 unable to meet the burden described in Subsection 73-3-3(5).

575 (b) If otherwise proper, the state engineer may approve a change application upon one
576 or more of the following conditions:

577 (i) for part of the water involved;

578 (ii) that the applicant acquire a conflicting right; or

579 (iii) that the applicant provide and implement a plan approved by the state engineer to
580 mitigate impairment of an existing right.

581 (c) (i) There is a rebuttable presumption of quantity impairment, as defined in Section
582 73-3-3, to the extent that, for a period of at least seven consecutive years, a portion of the right
583 identified in a change application has not been:

584 (A) diverted from the approved point of diversion; or

585 (B) beneficially used at the approved place of use.

586 (ii) The rebuttable presumption described in Subsection (6)(c)(i) does not apply if the
587 beneficial use requirement is excused by:

588 (A) Subsection 73-1-4(2)(e);

589 (B) an approved nonuse application under Subsection 73-1-4(2)(b);

590 (C) Subsection 73-3-30(7); or

591 (D) the passage of time under Subsection 73-1-4(2)(c)(i).

592 (d) The state engineer may not consider quantity impairment based on the conditions
593 described in Subsection (6)(c) unless the issue is raised in a:

594 (i) timely protest that identifies which of the protestant's existing rights the protestant
595 reasonably believes will experience quantity impairment; or

596 (ii) written notice provided by the state engineer to the applicant within 90 days after
597 the change application is filed.

598 (e) The written notice described in Subsection (6)(d)(ii) shall:

599 (i) specifically identify an existing right the state engineer reasonably believes may
600 experience quantity impairment; and

601 (ii) be mailed to the owner of an identified right, as shown by the state engineer's
602 records, if the owner has not protested the change application.

603 (f) The state engineer is not required to include all rights the state engineer believes
604 may be impaired by the proposed change in the written notice described in Subsection
605 (6)(d)(ii).

606 (g) The owner of a right who receives the written notice described in Subsection
607 (6)(d)(ii) may not become a party to the administrative proceeding if the owner has not filed a
608 timely protest.

609 (h) If a change applicant, the protestants, and the persons identified by the state
610 engineer under Subsection (6)(d)(ii) come to a written agreement regarding how the issue of
611 quantity impairment shall be mitigated, the state engineer may incorporate the terms of the
612 agreement into a change application approval.

613 Section 5. Section 73-3-16 is amended to read:

614 **73-3-16. Proof of appropriation or permanent change -- Notice -- Manner of**
615 **proof -- Statements -- Maps, profiles, and drawings -- Verification -- Waiver of filing --**
616 **Statement in lieu of proof of appropriation or change.**

617 (1) Sixty days before the date set for the proof of appropriation or proof of change to be
618 made, the state engineer shall notify the applicant by mail, or send notice electronically if
619 receipt is verifiable, when proof of completion of the works and application of the water to a
620 beneficial use is due.

621 (2) (a) On or before the date set for completing the proof in accordance with the
622 approved application, the applicant shall file proof with the state engineer on forms furnished
623 by the state engineer.

624 (b) The filing of a proof in accordance with this section is a request for agency action
625 under Title 63G, Chapter 4, Administrative Procedures Act, only between the applicant and the
626 state engineer.

627 (3) Except as provided in Subsection (4), the applicant shall submit the following
628 information:

629 (a) a description of the works constructed;

630 (b) the quantity of water in acre-feet or the flow in second-feet diverted, or both;

631 (c) the method of:

632 (i) applying the water to beneficial use; or

633 (ii) verifying a net decrease in depletion or net reduction in diversion in accordance
634 with an application to quantify saved water, as defined in Section [73-3-3](#); and

635 (d) (i) detailed measurements;

636 (A) of water put to beneficial use; and

637 (B) if applicable, demonstrating the quantity of saved water, as defined in Section
638 [73-3-3](#);

639 (ii) the date the measurements were made; and

640 (iii) the name of the person making the measurements.

641 (4) (a) (i) On applications filed for appropriation or permanent change of use of water
642 to provide a water supply for state projects constructed pursuant to Chapter 10, Board of Water
643 Resources - Division of Water Resources, or for federal projects constructed by the United
644 States Bureau of Reclamation for the use and benefit of the state, any of its agencies, its
645 political subdivisions, public and quasi-municipal corporations, or water users' associations of
646 which the state, its agencies, political subdivisions, or public and quasi-municipal corporations
647 are stockholders, the proof shall include:

- 648 (A) a statement indicating construction of the project works has been completed;
- 649 (B) a description of the major features with appropriate maps, profiles, drawings, and
650 reservoir area-capacity curves;
- 651 (C) a description of the point or points of diversion and rediversion;
- 652 (D) project operation data;
- 653 (E) a map showing the place of use of water and a statement of the purpose and method
654 of use;
- 655 (F) the project plan for beneficial use of water under the applications and the quantity
656 of water required; and
- 657 (G) a statement indicating what type of measuring devices have been installed.
- 658 (ii) The director of the Division of Water Resources shall sign proofs for the state
659 projects and an authorized official of the Bureau of Reclamation shall sign proofs for the
660 federal projects specified in Subsection (4)(a)(i).
- 661 (b) Proof on an application for appropriation or permanent change for a surface storage
662 facility in excess of 1,000 acre-feet constructed by a public water supplier to provide a water
663 supply for the reasonable requirements of the public shall include:
 - 664 (i) a description of the completed water storage facility;
 - 665 (ii) a description of the major project features and appropriate maps, profiles, drawings,
666 and reservoir area-capacity curves as required by the state engineer;
 - 667 (iii) the quantity of water stored in acre-feet;
 - 668 (iv) a description of the water distribution facility for the delivery of the water; and
 - 669 (v) the project plan for beneficial use of water including any existing contracts for
670 water delivery.
- 671 (5) The proof on an application shall be sworn to by the applicant or the applicant's
672 appointed representative.
- 673 (6) (a) Except as provided in Subsection (6)(b), when filing proof, the applicant shall
674 submit maps, profiles, and drawings made by a Utah licensed land surveyor or Utah licensed
675 professional engineer that show:
 - 676 (i) the location of the completed works;
 - 677 (ii) the nature and extent of the completed works;
 - 678 (iii) the natural stream or source from which and the point where the water is diverted

679 and, in the case of a nonconsumptive use, the point where the water is returned; and

680 (iv) the place of use.

681 (b) The state engineer may waive the filing of maps, profiles, and drawings if in the
682 state engineer's opinion the written proof adequately describes the works and the nature and
683 extent of beneficial use.

684 (7) In those areas in which general determination proceedings are pending, or have
685 been concluded, under Chapter 4, Determination of Water Rights, the state engineer may
686 petition the district court for permission to:

687 (a) waive the requirements of this section and Section 73-3-17; and

688 (b) permit each owner of an application to file a verified statement to the effect that the
689 applicant has completed the appropriation or change and elects to file a statement of water
690 users claim in the proposed determination of water rights or any supplement to it in accordance
691 with Chapter 4, Determination of Water Rights, in lieu of proof of appropriation or proof of
692 change.

693 (8) This section does not apply to a fixed time or temporary change application.

694 Section 6. Section 73-3-17 is amended to read:

695 **73-3-17. Certificate of appropriation -- Evidence.**

696 (1) Upon the satisfaction of the state engineer that an appropriation, a permanent
697 change of point of diversion, place or purpose of use, or a fixed time change authorized by
698 Section 73-3-30 has been perfected in accordance with the application, and that the water
699 appropriated or affected by the change has been put to a beneficial use, as required by Section
700 73-3-16 or 73-3-30, or demonstrated to be saved water, as defined in Section 73-3-3, the state
701 engineer shall issue a certificate, in duplicate, setting forth:

702 (a) the name and post-office address of the person by whom the water is used;

703 (b) the quantity of water in acre-feet or the flow in second-feet appropriated and, if
704 applicable, the quantity of saved water, as defined in Section 73-3-3;

705 (c) the purpose for which the water is used;

706 (d) the time during which the water is to be used each year;

707 (e) the name of the stream or water source:

708 (i) from which the water is diverted; or

709 (ii) within which an instream flow is maintained;

710 (f) the date of the appropriation or change; and
711 (g) other information that defines the extent and conditions of actual application of the
712 water to a beneficial use.

713 (2) A certificate issued on an application for one of the following types of projects need
714 show no more than the facts shown in the proof submitted under Section 73-3-16:

715 (a) a project constructed according to Chapter 10, Board of Water Resources - Division
716 of Water Resources;

717 (b) a federal project constructed by the United States Bureau of Reclamation, referred
718 to in Section 73-3-16; and

719 (c) a surface water storage facility in excess of 1,000 acre-feet constructed by a public
720 water supplier.

721 (3) A certificate issued under this section does not:

722 (a) extend the rights described in the application; or

723 (b) constitute a determination by the state engineer as to whether the perfected
724 appropriation or change has or may result in interference, impairment, injury, or other harm to
725 another water right.

726 (4) Failure to file proof of appropriation or proof of change of the water on or before
727 the date set for the filing causes the application to lapse.

728 (5) (a) One copy of a certificate issued under this section shall be filed in the office of
729 the state engineer and the other copy shall be delivered to the appropriator or to the person
730 making the change who may record the certificate in the office of the county recorder of the
731 county in which the water is diverted from the natural stream or source.

732 (b) The state engineer is not required to deliver a copy of a certificate issued under this
733 section to a person other than the appropriator or the person making the change.

734 (6) The certificate issued under this section is prima facie evidence of the owner's right
735 to use the water in the quantity, for the purpose, at the place, and during the time specified in
736 the certificate, subject to prior rights.

737 Section 7. Section 73-3-27 is amended to read:

738 **73-3-27. Requests for segregation or consolidation.**

739 (1) (a) Upon written request, the state engineer shall segregate into two or more parts
740 the following in the state engineer's records:

- 741 (i) an application to:
- 742 (A) under Section 73-3-2, appropriate water;
- 743 (B) under Section 73-3-3, permanently change:
- 744 (I) the point of diversion;
- 745 (II) the place of water use; or
- 746 (III) the purpose of water use; and
- 747 (ii) a water right for which:
- 748 (A) the state engineer has issued a certificate according to Section 73-3-17;
- 749 (B) a court has entered a judgment according to Section 73-4-15; and
- 750 (C) a person has filed a claim according to Section 73-5-13.
- 751 (b) A person shall:
- 752 (i) submit the request authorized by Subsection (1)(a) on a form furnished by the state
- 753 engineer; and
- 754 (ii) include:
- 755 (A) the water right number to be segregated;
- 756 (B) the name and post-office address of the owner of the application or water right;
- 757 (C) a statement of the nature of the proposed segregation;
- 758 (D) the reasons for the proposed segregation; and
- 759 (E) other information the state engineer may require to accomplish the segregation.
- 760 (c) Notwithstanding Subsection (1)(a), saved water, as defined in Section 73-3-3, may
- 761 not be segregated from the underlying water right that serves as the basis of the saved water,
- 762 except in accordance with rules made under Section 73-2-1 and Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah
- 763 Administrative Rulemaking Act.
- 764 (2) (a) An action taken by the state engineer on an application or water right before
- 765 segregation is applicable in all respects to the segregated parts of the application or water right.
- 766 (b) After the state engineer segregates the application or water right, each segregated
- 767 part is a separate application or water right in the state engineer's records.
- 768 (c) The segregation of an application or a water right in the state engineer's records
- 769 does not:
- 770 (i) confirm the validity or good standing of the segregated parts of the application or
- 771 water right; or

772 (ii) extend the time for the construction of works for an application.

773 (3) Upon written request, the state engineer may consolidate two or more applications
774 or water rights if the applications or water rights:

775 (a) are from the same source;

776 (b) have the same priority date; and

777 (c) are sufficiently consistent in definition that the consolidated application or water
778 right may be described without referring to the characteristics of the individual application or
779 water right that existed before consolidation.

780 Section 8. Section 73-10g-203.5 is amended to read:

781 **73-10g-203.5. Definitions.**

782 As used in this part:

783 (1) "Account" means the Agricultural Water Optimization Account created in Section
784 73-10g-204.

785 (2) "Agricultural water optimization" means the implementation of agricultural and
786 water management practices that maintain viable agriculture [~~while reducing~~] without
787 increasing water depletion to enhance water availability and minimize impacts on water supply,
788 water quality, and the environment.

789 (3) "Change application" means an application filed under Section 73-3-3.

790 (4) "Committee" means the Agricultural Water Optimization Committee created in
791 Section 73-10g-205.

792 (5) "Conservation commission" means the conservation commission created in Section
793 4-18-104.

794 (6) "Department" means the Department of Agriculture and Food.

795 [~~(7) "Depletion reduction" means a net decrease in water consumed accomplished by~~
796 ~~implementing water optimization practices during beneficial use of water under an approved~~
797 ~~water right.~~]

798 [~~(8) "Diversion reduction" means a decrease in net diversion amount from that allowed~~
799 ~~under a water right accomplished by implementation of water optimization practices.~~]

800 [~~(9)~~] (7) "Funding application" means an application filed under Section 73-10g-206.

801 [~~(10)~~] (8) "Saved water" means [~~the water quantified as depletion reduction or~~
802 ~~diversion reduction in a final order approving a change application filed in conjunction with an~~

803 ~~agricultural water optimization project]~~ the same as that term is defined in Section 73-3-3.

804 Section 9. Section **73-10g-206** is amended to read:

805 **73-10g-206. Agricultural water optimization grants -- Demonstration of water**
806 **savings.**

807 (1) The conservation commission may issue a grant described in Subsection
808 **73-10g-204**(3) in accordance with the procedures in this section.

809 (2) (a) The committee shall establish funding application periods during which a
810 person may apply for a grant under this part.

811 (b) During a funding application period, a person may file a funding application with
812 the department for preliminary screening of eligibility to receive a grant under this part,
813 including requisite water savings.

814 (c) The department shall screen the funding applications for eligibility.

815 (d) If the department determines that an applicant meets eligibility requirements and
816 proposes water savings, the department shall provide the applicant preliminary approval.

817 (e) After receiving preliminary approval under Subsection (2)(d), the applicant shall
818 engage in a pre-filing consultation with the Division of Water Rights under Subsection
819 **73-3-3**(2) to determine whether a change application is required to accomplish the project
820 proposed in the funding application or to quantify saved water [~~that may be made available for~~
821 ~~beneficial use as part of the project~~].

822 (f) Once the Division of Water Rights determines whether the person is required to file
823 a change application, the person may complete the funding application process and file the
824 completed funding application with the committee.

825 (g) The committee shall review completed funding applications to rank the funding
826 applications and recommend to the conservation commission which applicants should receive a
827 grant under this part for the relevant funding application period.

828 (h) The conservation commission may issue a grant under this section only after receipt
829 of the recommendations of the committee.

830 (3) If the conservation commission issues a grant under this part, before the grant
831 recipient may receive the grant money, the grant recipient shall:

832 (a) enter into a contract with the department that includes:

833 (i) the expectations for the grant recipient;

- 834 (ii) the life expectancy of a project;
- 835 (iii) the process of certifying completion; and
- 836 (iv) design requirements;
- 837 (b) file any needed change application and obtain a final order from the state engineer
- 838 approving the change application, including any judicial review of the state engineer's order;
- 839 and
- 840 (c) demonstrate how the grant recipient shall comply with the requirements of the final
- 841 order approving the related change application.
- 842 (4) A grant recipient shall comply with the monitoring and reporting requirements
- 843 under the contract described in Subsection (3).
- 844 (5) The department shall:
- 845 (a) monitor the grant related activities of a grant recipient;
- 846 (b) certify a project funded by a grant once the project is complete;
- 847 (c) determine whether there are funding sources other than the account to fund the
- 848 grant; and
- 849 (d) provide information needed by the division or the Division of Water Rights to
- 850 fulfill the division's or the Division of Water Rights' statutory duties, including those
- 851 designated in this chapter.
- 852 (6) The department may:
- 853 (a) conduct outreach campaigns related to the grant program, including the program's
- 854 purpose and expectations for grant recipients;
- 855 (b) solicit funding applications and assist persons in applying for a grant under this
- 856 part;
- 857 (c) assist grant recipients in developing a project; and
- 858 (d) coordinate with federal agencies and the division for evaluation of funding
- 859 applications and for assistance with implementing projects for which funding has been
- 860 provided under this part.
- 861 (7) Grant money may be used by the department or a grant recipient for the hiring of
- 862 third-party consultants as appropriate to complete a project funded by grant money.
- 863 (8) The division, upon request from the committee, may assist with evaluation of
- 864 funding applications and implementation of projects funded under this part.

865 Section 10. **Repealer.**

866 This bill repeals:

867 Section **73-10g-208**, **Water use pursuant to a water optimization change**

868 **application.**

869 Section 11. **Effective date.**

870 This bill takes effect on May 1, 2024.