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STATE OF UTAH
SCHOOL & INSTITUTIONAL TRUST LANDS ADMINISTRATION
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TRUST LANDS RECEIVES FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION AWARD

The School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA) recently received an award from Mr. James Christian of the Federal Highway Administration: "The Federal Highway Administration – Exemplary Ecosystem Initiative – Exemplary Human Environment Initiative."

Christian said that, "Every year the administration looks nation-wide for examples of projects that have exemplary human and environmental initiative for exceptional stewardship." Last year there were three awards given in the nation, and the St. George Southern Parkway Corridor was one of those receiving the award

Through the coordinated efforts of SITLA, the city of St. George, the Utah division of the Federal Highway Administration, the Utah Department of Transportation, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and The Nature Conservancy, this was a remarkably successful project in protecting the corridor, as well as the environment.

The re-use of water in a desert was initially planned by UDOT as a way to provide lower-cost water for construction of the Southern Parkway. UDOT planned to place a temporary water line on the surface of the ground carrying re-use water to the construction project and then remove the line once the project was finished.

However, it was determined that, for very little additional cost, the water line could be buried permanently. This new water line will supply future commercial and residential developments in the area and their need for secondary or irrigation water. The cost for the re-use water is approximately half the cost of culinary water.

The Nature Conservancy is protecting several hundred acres for plants and animals including the zebra-tailed lizard and loggerhead shrike. It also contains some of the last remaining populations of the threatened Siler pincushion cactus and the endangered dwarf bear claw poppy. Visitors to the area will eventually enjoy public hiking trails and educational signage.

Since the initial purchase in June of 2005, the Conservancy conducted innovative restoration work improving the area's habitat for the dwarf bear claw poppy. Ecologists restored degraded habitat by de-compacting the soils and planting seeds native to the area. SITLA facilitated this restoration project by contributing biological soil crusts from adjacent lands.

SITLA's Director, Mr. Kevin Carter said, "It was a surprise and a privilege to receive such a prestigious award. We appreciate the recognition of the hard work, communication, and combined efforts of all our agencies".

SITLA is an independent state agency that manages 3.4 million acres of Utah trust lands for the benefit of Utah's schools and other public institutions. Money generated from the school trust lands is deposited in the state Permanent School Fund, a perpetual endowment that annually distributes income to each K-12 public school in Utah.

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