

Andrew Johnston

Candidate for Salt Lake City Council

District 2



climate change and the negative effects to the mountain ecosystem.

3. Transportation. What are your thoughts about UDOT's plans for reducing traffic congestion in Little Cottonwood Canyon? How much do you think this plan should try to reduce congestion by increasing the number of cars that the highway and parking areas can handle versus some form of public transit that reduces reliance on cars?

As with most policy issues, there is a balance to be struck. Ultimately, we will need to invest more into shared transportation to move more people in fewer vehicles like shuttles or buses. That will still include public parking outside the canyons. We have an issue now, but population projections tell us we need to plan for at least 50% more people using those canyons soon and as many as two times that number longer term. I look forward to the studies being conducted to provide more concrete recommendations.

4. Public Lands. What are your thoughts with regard to the current Central Wasatch National

Conservation and Recreation Area (CWNCR) proposal and efforts to enact federal legislation to protect the Central Wasatch Mountains?

I endorse the CWNCR. It is so difficult to get consensus legislation created and though it hasn't been passed, I think it lays the right framework for managing the competing interests on the Central Wasatch mountains. I would heavily encourage congress to take it up again asap.

5. Recreation. Are you concerned that very high recreational usage is harming the environment(s) or degrading the experience of being in the canyons? What zoning, ordinance or policy decisions would you support to maintain a balance of recreational use and habitat health and water quality in the Central Wasatch Canyons?

I am concerned but it's a difficult nut to crack to balance open public access with overuse. Salt Lake City Corp. has spent and continues to spend a tremendous amount of time, money and energy purchasing land within the 7 Wasatch canyons locally to protect the watershed and legally defending those efforts from developer lawsuits. I am fully supportive of using our city resources to do these two things. Over use will need to be managed through transportation infrastructure, perhaps using some tolls (though that bothers me personally as limiting access from the public, particularly low-income individuals), and investing in some canyons infrastructure including existing road upgrades, bathroom facilities and other amenities to try and mitigate the effect of more people wanting to be outdoors there. Again, I welcome current studies and recommendations that will help provide more data and ideas to protect healthy access to the wilderness.

1. Introduce yourself to our members. Describe your relationship to the Central Wasatch Mountains. What's your favorite place to visit? What are your favorite activities? What do you find compelling about the Central Wasatch Mountains?

I grew up in the shadow of Mount Timpanogos in Orem and cannot recall a time when they were not a part of my life. I learned to ski at Sundance resort, learned to snowboard at Brighton. Have loved hiking Mont Olympus, Lone Peak and Timp. My wife and I love hiking to Dog Lake and Lake Blanche or up Millcreek. On a more local level, I still run and walk the Bonneville shoreline trail and the ridgeline of City Creek Canyon.

I am an administrator at Volunteers of America, Utah and an LCSW with 20 years' experience working in the fields of addiction, mental illness and homelessness. I have loved my last 4 years serving as the Salt Lake City Council member representing district 2, the Westside.

2. In your mind, what are the most important issues facing the Central Wasatch Mountains today?

Protection of the watershed, creating more sustainable transportation into and out of the mountains year-round, tremendous recreation demands from a growing population, overall

6. Water policy. Utah cities have been granted authority to protect sources of drinking water under a provision called “extraterritorial jurisdiction.” In recent years this authority has come under attack by legislators, developers, and speculators seeking to diminish Salt Lake City’s ability to protect water quality. If elected, how will you insure citizens continue to have access to high quality drinking water while balancing other uses in our watersheds?

As mentioned earlier, I fully support using city funds to purchase available lands within the watershed and defending them in court. I also endorse the existing policy of not taking major action within the extended watershed areas of Uintas or outside of the Central Wasatch without local county input as a means to balance their concerns of SLC being too intrusive in their areas with also continuing to protect water quality and access for not just Salt Lake, but most of the county.

7. Local Ordinance(s). What types of ordinances should be put in place (or revisited) to protect the environment, water quality, access, and integrity of the Central Wasatch Mountains?

The biggest thing we can do to positively impact the Wasatch mountains and valleys is invest heavily in master planned transportation and public transit. Pollution in the valleys impact the wilderness. If we manage housing, employment and recreation growth responsibly we can decrease pollution, increase smart housing and jobs and become more efficient in using the Wasatch mountains for recreation. I am looking forward to the results of the CCTAP to help guide transportation planning for the cottonwood canyons. This should also be deeply integrated with the WFRC 2050 planning for the metro areas, so they work together instead of

just have them interact at the mouth of the canyons.

Unfortunately, we take for granted water quality until it becomes unsafe. The role of the city to ensure this safety even if no one notices. It costs money and we need to treat utilities like this as public safety issues and allocate resources to them to ensure we don’t have problems. Water quality is also going to be deeply related to managing use sustainably. We have a long way to go to even understanding our water usage, let alone acting more sustainably. I am encouraged (slightly) with state legislation to encourage monitoring of secondary water usage across the state. Baby steps. I endorse our SLC ordinance mandating 30% of front landscaping be natural but encouraging waterwise landscaping. I also support our tiered rates for commercial and residential use. There are so many other things we could do like eliminating plastic bags (why this hasn’t happened in SLC is a story for another day) and other practices that directly or indirectly harm the canyons and natural areas of the region.

8. Land Use Planning. The canyons are already very heavily used and, as you probably know, the population of the Wasatch Front is expected to double within several decades. What would you like the canyons to be like in fifty or sixty years, and what, if anything, do you think our government needs to do to make sure it will be that way?

We need to look to our national parks or other nations with more density today to see the demands we will see later (I do understand that the two Cottonwood Canyons see more visitors than Utah’s national parks). Their experiments with transportation, reservations, parking and sustainable design should inform us (both as good

ideas and cautionary lessons) in current planning. I think access to the outdoors and mountains is so critical to better physical and mental health for us all. We need to come at this with the belief that we can, and need to, provide reasonable access for everyone if we become efficient in our transportation options and careful in our planning. We may also find surprising trends that affect our planning such as the fact that we have more county households with pets (dogs) than children. Are we thinking of those needs in accessing the canyons in coming years?

9. Is there anything else people should understand about your vision, plans, ideas, or policies for the Central Wasatch Mountains?

Spend the time and money purchasing and defending the watersheds and invest heavily in better and more efficient transportation systems.

Save Our Canyons is a 501c3 non-profit organization. These questionnaires are provided for the benefit of our members and the community we seek to serve. We reached out to all candidates for the particular office and have provided responses un-edited as they were received, some candidates have opted to not respond. If you have questions about the responses, we encourage you to reach out to the candidate. If you have a comment about the questionnaire or a suggestion of others elected seats we should issue to, please reach out to Save Our Canyons. 801-363-7283, info@saveourcanyons.org