

Inland Port Authority prioritizes human and environmental health. It's my job to ensure it.

Since I was a little girl, I've always dreamed of making the world a better place. I grew up spending hours on end running barefoot through open pastures, making friends with every flower and worm I could find. I've always felt at home in the natural world. To me, the environment's intrinsic value is undeniable and irreplaceable.

Caring about the planet cannot be a personal thing. Caring about communities cannot be a personal thing. It is an act of selflessness. It is an act of service. Environmentalism is not a platform for elitists nor for personal motives. Environmentalism needs to be a platform for accountability and for impacting positive change.

I joined the Inland Port because I wanted to influence positive change for our planet and our people. I saw an opportunity to reach hearts and change minds, to get involved at the heart of Utah's growth, the heart of Utah's future. Utah has and continues to show increasing growth rates. We continue to see growth trends around the globe. I see this as an opportunity to brainstorm creative and innovative ways to reduce carbon footprints and increase efficiency of our natural resource use as growth and associated development continue.

We must consider how we evolve our environmental footprint on the world, as each individual's and each organization's footprint contribute to the cumulative effects of climate change. We must think about managing our natural resources more efficiently, protecting precious features that make up the living, breathing ecosystem that we inhabit. While our species continues to expand, our limited resources do not.

We have so much to learn from the natural world when it comes to regeneration and replenishment. Land has value beyond its economic use. Every opportunity that presents itself in the developing world to shift the "norm," to influence and adjust what is "normal," in effort to support a more harmonious relationship between us and our planet's health and wellbeing must be examined in full.

It is difficult to create a moral relationship with the natural world if we do not love, admire or respect it. It is only when we realize that we, our planet and our quality of life are all interconnected that we can begin to understand the true, long-term impacts of our decisions in the world.

I joined the Inland Port to implement solutions that make progress in uplifting both humans and the natural environment. In 2022,

I worked with stakeholders in the northwest quadrant of Salt Lake City to prepare a Sustainability Action Study that presents sustainable strategies to mitigate adverse impacts to air quality and energy, natural and water resources, transportation, and land use.

The environmental review process I've built into each of UIPA's project areas identifies environmental considerations to guide balanced growth decisions that support a more harmonious relationship between developments and our natural environment.

Last November, I wrote a wetlands policy that was approved by UIPA's board, which designates tax differential from UIPA project areas to go towards the restoration, establishment, enhancement or preservation of Great Salt Lake and Utah Lake wetlands.

I've recently worked in partnership with the Utah Division of Air Quality to submit applications for two funding competitions under the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean

Ports Program grant opportunity that has dedicated \$2 billion from the Inflation Reduction Act to fund zero-emission port equipment and infrastructure as well as climate and air quality planning at U.S. ports. If awarded, these will bring in just over \$150 million to help transition operations at the Salt Lake City International Terminal towards zero-emissions.

The world is not what it was, nor will it ever be. Therefore, we must continue to look for and implement innovative solutions that bring harmony between us and the world we live in, that balance growth with environmental mindfulness, that consider the future of generations to come.

At the Port, I am working to spearhead solutions that uplift our technological and economic future as well as our human and environmental health. This is where creativity meets science and engineering, where big picture planning meets budgeting and financial savviness, where forces combine to tackle what I have observed to be one of our greatest challenges as humans living on planet Earth.

Environmental health is human health. Environmental justice is social justice. I

invite everyone to actively participate in improving environmental and human health, environmental and social justice. Learn about what you can do at home to reduce your environmental footprint and get involved with local initiatives and organizations that are actively working to implement solutions for positive change. You are welcome to reach out to me — smsmith@utah.gov — I'm always happy to make empowering connections. We must all do our part to reduce our individual and overall footprints and bring solutions online that contribute to a kinder, more sustainable future.

Mona Smith is the Environmental & Sustainability Director at the Utah Inland Port Authority (UIPA). After graduating from the Colorado School of Mines with a Bachelor of Science in Biochemical Engineering, she spent the first five years of her career supporting environmental remediation and revitalization projects before joining the Inland Port. She just purchased her first home on Salt Lake City's westside, and she couldn't be happier settling down in a vibrant community.

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