We here in Salt Lake City and northern Utah have some of the most amazing natural treasures in the nation. We have the Wasatch Front – so gorgeous to look at and play in when the air is clear.

We have the deserts and mountain ranges of the Great Basin, those beautiful expanses of muted colors and shapes, filled with plant and animal life that has adapted to desert dwelling.

And we have the Great Salt Lake, the largest geophysical feature in the state. And along with the Great Salt Lake and because of the Great Salt Lake and its intricate network and variety of wetlands, we have 10 million birds who visit and utilize the Lake every year. 10 Million!! Think about that. It is why the Great Salt Lake is considered not just a hemispherically important bird area. It is considered a globally important bird area. It is the largest of the terminal salt lakes of the West -- these critically important salt lakes that are all in decline due to drought, and human-driven water diversion.

And think about those 10 Million birds in the context of the recent report that a third of the world’s birds have been lost in the last 50 years due to climate change, drought and habitat fragmentation and loss from human sprawl.

And what have our Legislators done to this precious treasure? In 2018, they signed into law a most destructive and unnecessary project, the Utah Inland Port, situated at the southern doorstep of Great Salt Lake, right smack-dab in the path of the flyway these 10 million birds have used for millennia.

Salt Lake City and northern Utah have undergone enormous change in the last 10-20 years. The valley has basically hit and maybe even surpassed capacity. Our air is very polluted year round, one of the seven worst airsheds in the nation according to a new analysis that compared hundreds of U.S. cities.

Our traffic is snarled and congested. Our roads take such a punishment that UDOT is unable to keep up with all the repairs.

Our available housing is scant, especially our affordable housing. And even so, with all the building of apartments, houses and multi-unit dwellings wedged into
every available bit of square space, the developers, despite their lip service about the need for low cost affordable housing, keep erecting dwellings that command above market rents and price tags.

We have also experienced sprawl and development all along the east side of Great Salt Lake - along with the south end of Great Salt Lake, one of the areas most important to and most utilized by the birds. We have lost so much habitat in the last 10 years, it is just shocking.

And now, the Utah Inland Port is about to decimate 16,000 acres of critical upland and wetland habitat located on the south end of Great Salt Lake. And for what? For low paying warehouse jobs, even worse traffic congestion, even worse suffocating air quality, and an even greater squeeze on available, affordable housing.

And why? So that a few wealthy landowners and developers can take advantage and make a grundle of money. Do you know who the two largest landowners are now at the Inland Port? The two that have bought out most of the smaller owners so that they could engineer a sweep of the money to be made?

Colmena – the development company that has been erecting those enormous towers in Sugar House, an area that is already horribly congested, that has narrow streets with one lane in each direction.

And the other big landowner? Our friends at Rio Tinto, the second largest mining company in the world, a company that netted $13.8 Billion in profit in 2018. It is the company that is responsible for much of the air, ground and water pollution in this valley since 1887. The company that has said it is developing the Inland Port because it wants to leave the Salt Lake valley a legacy when it finally shuts down the mine in about 30 years. Some legacy!! Instead of developing this land that they bought at mitigation prices and are now selling at top dollar development prices, they should be using it to improve and conserve the wetlands and playas. They owe us 133 years of reparations.

We do not have an economic crisis in northern Utah. We have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation. We don’t have enough workers for the jobs available currently.
We do have a crisis of growth with overcrowding, traffic congestion and lack of housing.

We do have a crisis of air pollution. We have the seventh worst airshed in the nation.

We do have a crisis of habitat loss with all the urban sprawl that has taken place along the shores of the Lake.

The Inland Port is an egregious, reprehensible, unnecessary and unwanted project that will squander our remaining treasures. A few wealthy individuals will profit and the rest of us will pay for it and suffer.

For two years, we have been asking for answers to the hard questions of how wildlife and people of this valley are going to be protected from all the harms this project will bring. There has been an utter lack of responsiveness. We have been offered nothing substantive. There has been a complete lack of information and a very disturbing lack of transparency. There is now a great urgency to have our questions answered.

The public has repeatedly and unequivocally stated that they choose no development over the prospect of low-paying warehouse jobs, suffocating air pollution, noise pollution, light pollution and increased traffic. We have received no satisfaction from the Inland Port Authority Board.

So, we are asking, for the sake of the birds and the sake of the people of the Salt Lake Valley that will suffer the environmental consequences, we ask the Legislature to repeal the Inland Port.