

**MINUTES OF THE
NATURAL RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE, AND ENVIRONMENT INTERIM
COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, May 18, 2005 – 2:00 p.m. – Room W125 House Building

Members Present:

Sen. Thomas V. Hatch, Senate Chair
Rep. Roger E. Barrus, House chair
Sen. Gene Davis
Sen. Beverly Ann Evans
Sen. Parley G. Hellewell
Sen. Michael G. Waddoups
Rep. Jackie Biskupski
Rep. Craig W. Butters
Rep. Margaret Dayton
Rep. Carl W. Duckworth
Rep. James R. Gowans
Rep. Kory M. Holdaway

Rep. Bradley T. Johnson
Rep. John G. Mathis
Rep. Ronda Rudd Menlove
Rep. Michael E. Noel
Rep. David Ure
Rep. Mark A. Wheatley
Rep. Richard W. Wheeler

Staff Present:

Mr. J Brian Allred, Policy Analyst
Ms. Jeanenne B. Larson, Associate General Counsel
Ms. Joy L. Miller, Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present and a copy of related materials can be found at www.leg.utah.gov or by contacting the committee secretary, Joy Miller, at 538-1032. A recording of the meeting is available from the committee secretary.

1. Committee Business

Chair Barrus called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m.

MOTION: Rep. Wheeler moved to approve the minutes of the April 20, 2005 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Introduction of New Appointees in the Department of Natural Resources

Mr. Michael Styler, Executive Director, DNR (Department of Natural Resources), introduced Mr. Jim Karpowitz who has been appointed director of the Division of Wildlife Resources and Mr. Sidney P. Groll as the new director over Law Enforcement within the DNR. Mr. Karpowitz and Mr. Groll briefly spoke to the Committee and answered questions.

3. Overview and History of Water Rights Policy

Mr. Boyd Clayton, Assistant State Engineer, Division of Water Rights, gave a presentation on the basics of water rights. A water right is a right to the use of waters of the public regulated under the authority of the state engineer. He reviewed the origin of the doctrine of prior appropriation and discussed important dates in water rights history.

4. Agriculture Funding and Research at Utah State University

Dr. Paul Rasmussen, Associate Dean, College of Agriculture and Director, UAES (Utah Agricultural Experiment Station), Utah State University, distributed and reviewed "Funding for Fiscal Year 2003-2004" and "Current Utah Agricultural Experiment Station Projects." He noted that funding for the UAES comes

from the state Legislature, the federal government, cash, and contracts and grants. He reviewed the progress of some of the current projects.

Dr. Noelle Cockett, Provost, College of Agriculture, explained that the Legislature appropriated \$5 million this year to USU to begin the move of facilities from the north Logan farms and relocate them to the south farm and the Caine Dairy. They are addressing how they can consolidate all of their livestock facilities into this single location to begin build their production curriculum.

5. Multiple Use Management of SITLA (School and Institutional Trust Lands) and BLM (Bureau of Land Management) Lands

Rep. Mathis indicated he has been contacted by many of his constituents who have expressed their concerns regarding the effect that oil and gas drilling are having on grazing. He stated the sheep industry is struggling. He pointed out the increasing number of wells that are being drilled in the Uintah Basin which many fear will have permanent, negative consequences for grazing.

Mr. Bill Robinson, grazing permit holder, explained his family has ranched in eastern Utah for many years. He said they are losing 10-20 percent of their livelihood due to drilling. Once the topsoil has been disturbed, it cannot return to its natural state. He suggested that impact fees be assessed to help ranchers receive some reimbursement for their losses.

Mr. Burt Delambert, grazing permit holder, commented on the problems they have with the roads that are left in place after the drilling project has been completed.

Sen. Evans stated she would be willing to put together a working group of local individuals, BLM and SITLA representatives, stakeholders, and agricultural people to develop a solution.

6. S.J.R. 10 (2005 General Session) Resolution to Congress Regarding Oil and Gas Drilling and Exploration

Mr. Lee Peacock, Utah Petroleum Association, distributed an article from BLM News "Utah BLM has Record-Breaking Oil and Gas Lease Sale" and "Information Notice Protests Filed." He noted that when oil and gas leases are sold by BLM, because of protests, they are not subsequently issued and they remain in a state of escrow for many years.

Mr. Don Colton, Pioneer Oil and Gas, distributed a letter from him addressed to the Committee. At the most recent BLM lease sale, 176 parcels were offered of which 156 were protested. There are over 1,000,000 acres of leases that have been paid for by industry but lease issuance has been held up by protests. The state has more than \$22 million due it that is in escrow pending issuance of these leases.

7. Discussion of Wild Horse Issues on the West Desert

The issue will be discussed in a future meeting.

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MOTION: Rep. Dayton moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Barrus adjourned the meeting at 4:05 p.m.