

Meeting Minutes
Emery County Public Lands Council
February 6, 2024
10:00 AM
Emery County Courthouse
Canyon Conference Room

PLC: Rod Player, Les Wilberg, Ben Grimes, Kim McFarlane, Ray Petersen, Varian Allen, Leon McElprang, Sherrel Ward

Absent: Bruce Wilson

PL STAFF: Jim Jennings (ECPL), Jan Olsen (Secretary)

Visitors, Keven Jensen Commissioner, Jordan Leonard Commissioner, Clay Crozier (PLPCO), Larry Ellertson (Curtis), Kent Wilson (Romney), Bart Kettle & Dal Gray (DOGM), Chris Wood & Brandon Behling (DWR), Marc Stilson & Michele Gabb (DWRI), Jay Humphrey (EWCD), Darren Olsen (USFS), Jaydon Mead, and Kyle Beagley (BLM), Bryan Torgerson (SITLA), Don Bennett & Terri Bennett (Trails), Wayne Ludington, Ed Geary, Scott Wheeler (public)

Electronically: Joel Brown (Sen Lee), Phil Stubblefield (public)

1. Welcome

Chairman Rod Player opened the Emery County Public Lands meeting on Tuesday, March 5, with comments that the county website needs to be updated to list the new members and delete those no longer on the board. He also announced some events on the County Travel Bureau website, including the Bonnie and Clyde coyote hunt on March 7, the Water Melon Crawl in Green River on March 22 and 23, and the Green River Rock and Mineral Show on April 5 to 7.

2. Approval of Minutes for February 2023,

Ray Peterson motioned to approve the February meeting minutes, and Varian Allen seconded it. Motion passed.

3. Agency Reports and Council Member Comments

o **Bureau of Land Management (BLM)**

Agency reports began with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) by Kyle Beagley and Jaydon Mead. They first announced a fuel break project along Cedar Mountain Road and a power line project at Goblin Valley, which will soon be open for public comment. Plans are also to replace some buildings at Jurassic National Monument (dinosaur quarry). The San Rafael RAC will meet on Wednesday and Thursday, March 6, and 7, and there will be a field trip on Wednesday and an office meeting the following day. The main topic for their report was the

Travel Management Plan, which has been distributed on social media, and potential maps of route closings on the Swell.

The BLM reminded everyone that no official public comment has been opened yet but is planned for May. They further reported that on their website, there are four alternatives, ranging from the status of the most extreme changes to maybe even 2,500 routes. The council suggested improving the maps for study before public comments.

The driving force behind these changes was questioned, especially with the Dingell Act that the legislature had passed. They explained the settlement from a court decision outlined in the legislation. A work meeting for the council to discuss action is planned for May 7 at 12:30 p.m.

- **Emery Water Conservancy District**

No one in attendance

- **Division of Water Rights (DWRi)**

Marc Stilson, with the Division of Water Rights, reported to the council about funding for reclamation on the Cleveland Reservoir dam. He explained that hydrological scientists study dams for safety, and the budget is approved, much like what happened at Millsite. Stilson also spoke about recent legislation, and when questioned about secondary metering, he responded that Emery County would be exempt.

- **Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining (DOGM)**

Dal Gray spoke to the council about mines in Emery County, precisely one helium well that is closing because the quality was not as high as expected. A lithium well near Green River has become a nuisance but should be better when grinding is finished.

Bart Kettle also reported on Brine amendments, defines terms, grants rulemaking, mineral development areas, agreements, studies, permits, and recent legislation that affects their department. He also commented that natural gas production in Utah is up, while Emery County production remains flat.

- **Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR)**

Chris Wood spoke about putting simulated Beaver Dams along the Price River to improve the fish habitat. They are also doing Mule Deer (doe) capture work on Range Creek to track the mortality of fawns. They are also tracking three Bison near Range Creek for migration status.

Big game permits open from March 21 through April 25, 2024; you can see the numbered permits before you apply. Turkey Hunt, April 29, youth hunt 26-29. The mule deer group will be meeting to get all caught up with all management.

Brandon Behling spoke on a private property owner's desire to build three cabins along the north shore of Cleveland Reservoir and concerns

about public access for fishing and hunting in that area. The Forest Service, Department of Wildlife, and Commissioners voiced their concerns. They had all met with the property owner and are concerned about litigation if permission is not granted. He wants to improve the roads and add bathrooms to this area, but that is not something the DWR is allowed to do. It would then be for private use only. There are better places to launch a boat. It did not make it appeal to us for consideration. On this side, it has always been public access.

- **Trust Lands Administration (TLA).**

Bryan Torgersen from the Trust Lands Administration (TLA) Dingle Act exchange waiting for the appraisal to come in, hopefully by May.

In Walker Flat Area, they are still mining coal; it is BLM Land, but it will be part of the land exchange.

NASS service on grazing pricing updates, 30% for scattered sections and 66% for the block sections. Grazing rates are going up, scattered \$6.94 blocks \$12.07.

- **Manti-LaSal National Forest (MLNF)**

- **Utah State Parks**

No one in attendance

- **Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation**

I have trained this week and cannot attend this month's Public Lands or Trails Committee meeting. Please share with the members:

We are hosting our Mountain West Trails Conference in Vernal in May.

Most of our Grants are open and will close shortly.

The Utah Outdoor Recreation Grant closes March 15th

The OHV Recreation Grant Closes April 2nd

The Recreational Trails Program Grant Closes March 31st

We will move some patrol focus to Emery for the Watermelon Crawl and Easter Weekend. This reminds the public to take the OHV educational course if needed. If any of the agencies need further help, please let me know.

- **Utah State Department of Agriculture**

No one in attendance

- **PLPCO**

Clay Crozier reports that working with routes will be critical for closing the land exchange. You can use an interactivity map to help write your support letters. Can alternative A map be added to the map?

Resolution for next meeting with alternatives.

The Lands Council has a letter for alternative routes.

BLM sale parcel out by the power plant.

Moab 3 rivers, mineral withdrawal, Green River, Land north of Green River, Deloris, will be renewed for 20 years. Check it out.

The north bench and agreement to close the horse bench loop and 9-mile crossing are new interests in keeping that trail open. Need to keep this in mind.

- **Washington Delegation Staff**

Larry Ellertson reported that Senator Lee and Cong. Curtis introduced legislation, the Restoring Historic Preservation Act. This is still an item of interest. I am involved in keeping these roads open.

GO Thermal Energy moves over projects.

Compensation for States that are putting out funding for Imagination. Unlock the LMG to reverse the band.

Kent Wilson stated if the Railroad is coming in. 7- County is going to the Supreme Court. If you are for this, voice your opinion to 7 County.

Senator Romney Bill 2019. Emery County worked for 20 years and wanted something other than a monument. Travel management wants a plan for something other than a monument. The recreation area dispersed camping and lets roads be closed. Spend the time to make the public comment period worth it. How do we spread the word? Tell everyone about it. We need to get the OHV, Rett Stewart involved.

Make factual comments on the Travel Management Plan access area so the votes really count.

4. Commission Comments on Public Land Items

Travel Management Plan, the most liberal. Want to have access to the Cleveland Reservoir. Long Street, and to their knowledge they think it is closed, asked the County Attorney to send a letter letting them know it is not closed.

5. Additional Issues From Council Members

Update on the snow pack in December it was looking pretty bleak, now it has snowed, and it has been wonderful, we are going to have WATER.

6. Concerned Citizens with Emery County-related issues

Avid off-road vehicle users just keep getting more and more restricted. They have lost many of the access points that they are planning on closing. We need to fight for our rights.

7. Adjourn

Les Wilberg motioned to adjourn, and Rod Player seconded.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Emery County Public Lands Council is to represent the interests of the public land of Emery County and its citizens and to perform an advocacy role for local users and stakeholders; to work in partnership with federal and state agencies in fashioning management decisions and policies affecting lands within Emery County; and to participate in the development, coordination, and implementation of the planning objectives of federal, state, and local entities to ensure harmony between the objectives of these various entities and the Emery County General Plan. It is the intent and purpose of the Emery County Public Lands Council to aggressively preserve the community heritage of Emery County by vigorously participating in and influencing all public land planning and decision-making processes on behalf of and under the authority of the Emery County Commission.