

# Meeting Minutes

Emery County Public Lands Council  
May 6, 2025  
10:00 AM

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**PLC:** Rod Player, Ray Petersen, Leon McElprang, Bruce Wilson, Travis Richards, Kim McFarlane, Ben Grimes, Sherrel Ward

**Excused:** Andy Gordon (PLC), Varian Allen (PLC)

**PL STAFF:** Jim Jennings (ECPL), Jan Olsen (Assistant)

**VISITOR:** Commissioner Jordan Leonard, Commissioner Dennis Worwood, Nicole Nielson (PLPCO), Darren Olsen (USFS), Dal Grey (DOGM), Kyle Beagley (BLM), Larry Ellertson, Senator Curtis)

**Electronically:** Joel Brown (Senator Lee), Julie Johansen (ETV), Nathan Martiniz (USP), Bryan Torgerson (TLA), Akalii Windwalker (?)

## 1. Welcome

Chairman Rod Player welcomed everyone to the meeting.

## 2. Approval of Minutes for April 1, 2025.

Les Wilberg motioned to approve the April minutes, and Ray Petersen seconded the motion, which passed.

Chairman Rod Player led the discussion with two questions for the board members:

1. What do you like most about Public Lands?

2. What do you like the least about Public Lands?

- Rod Player
  - Likes - Anytime you don't have to worry about going onto public property as trespassing, we can go anywhere and anytime for free, for the most part. We really are fortunate that we have this as close as we do.
  - Dislike - I've been into some quite remote places, and you have plastic drinking bottles, aluminum cans, and plastic bags. Every time you go, it gets worse. I do not know how to make it better, but I wish people could be more respectful.
- Ray Petersen
  - Likes - I appreciate the most is just the diversity of what we have from the public lands here, including the resources, the economic drivers you know, for the county, putting the livestock, mining, minerals, and everything that has to do with that how beneficial that has been and then the recreational side. I went ice climbing at age 65 for the first time, and it was a lot of fun. We are very blessed.
  - Dislikes - it's like we're attracting many people and using more and more constantly. Some of those issues are more frequent visits, garbage, and mistreatment. Especially on the Wedge, the visitation has increased, and I find myself avoiding areas where there's too much use or is overused. I have often said that we need help from our legislation, more resources to help

manage, and more funds for law enforcement. If we don't manage our resources, we'll lose them.

- Kim McFarlane
  - Likes - access and diversity. I've had several opportunities to move out of Green River and decided to stay there despite less favorable changes because we have multiple uses in our area.
  - Dislikes - increased visitation and the overuse are problems that I see. I disagree with the tourism emphasis on promoting visitation. I think that it takes away from our ability to preserve and protect our land, allowing people to come in, and there must be some kind of balance; we must recognize that we can overutilize and overpromote.
- Travis Gordon
  - Likes - the thing I love the most is that I can hunt elk on the mountain ten minutes from my house, and in 15 minutes from my house, we can be in the desert, whatever we want. You can do so much, and it's such a short time. I love it because it is where my grandpa took me as a child.
  - Dislikes - I don't like that it is overrun with visitors.
- Leon McElprang
  - Likes - I would like to go with our vision statement, I like multiple uses, I like that there's something there for everybody, I like that there's some resources out there that we can convert into protein to feed people at a reasonable rate.
  - Dislikes - This is how we forgot the foundation of it all. There isn't a trail out there that wasn't made by agriculture, but now people are fighting against it being there. We want to talk about wildlife, but there is no watering hole, a pond, or anything out there for the wildlife. They want to push away our heritage from the beginning of it all.
- Sherrel Ward
  - Likes - I like that I'm old enough and remember I could go out there and never see another person—the beauty of it all, and the respect that was given.
  - Dislikes - Now there is not a weekend out there that you don't see at least 7-8 camps, and it is not even Easter, just every weekend. I would like to preserve what we have. Every year, there is more and more traffic, like in Spanish Fork, and it is hard to even drive. I am kind of selfish and would like a way to control the amount of traffic out there. Down on the Muddy Creek, those hills down that are colorful and spectacular, the first time I went down there, there was no track on them anywhere, not even footprints, because we all knew that if it was wet, you would sink 3" deep in that soil. It will take decades if it ever recovers. Now I do not go there because all you see are tracks from motorcycles, sidebysides, and four-wheelers. I have seen a four-wheeler buried just 20 feet from the road, because the new generation is not taught to respect it, and it is hard to see.

- Ben Grimes
  - Likes - My favorite things are air use, so many different groups can use it, and use it well. We're doing a good job; we're well ahead of people in protecting what needs to be protected.
  - Dislike - although at times the management of public land is not up to what it should be, we're well ahead of others. We do as much as possible to manage, protect, and use all those.
- Les Wilberg
  - Likes - I like what everyone else has said.
  - Dislike - Like everybody else, I dislike all the visitation down there. I remember that if you went to the desert, you had to tell somebody where you were going, because if you broke down or had problems, you might be a week before somebody found you, so the overuse is a concern.

Chairman Player addressed one more item, he would like the council to invite other agencies to come and give us a 10-15 minute report on the things that they are doing in the county, such as the Road Dept, Backwoods Horseman, Timber, Solar, just to enlighten us on what else takes place on our lands.

Please review the bylaws sent out and see if things need to be changed or revised for our next meeting. We want to make sure we comply with the policy.

### **3. Agency Reports and Council Member Comments**

**Utah State Department of Agriculture**  
No one in attendance

**Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation**  
No one in attendance

**Division of Water Rights (DWRi)**  
No one in attendance

**Utah State Parks**  
Nathan Martiniz reported that we are busy right now. It's our busy season. Things are going well. We just held our disc golf tournament. We had the most players we've ever had in any tournament, about 100 people.

We also got funding from the ORB grants to expand our golf course to add nine more holes to disc golf, which will be put on the other side of Main Street in that vacant lot—27 new disc golf holes. We've got another tournament.

The campground has been filling up on weekdays and weekends. We have hired a full-time, Rene, who is doing a fantastic job, and all our seasonals have been hired.

[stateparks.utah.gov](http://stateparks.utah.gov).

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

Darren Olsen reported they have crews out for conservation day today, through this week, and some next week. It's a good program to speak to many elementary-age students, maybe fourth graders specifically, schools here in Emery County and Carbon County participate. We do this up at Little Bear Campground. Talk to them about natural resource types, hydrology, wildlife, archeology, range, weeds, and fire.

We had a proposal for a tow rope at the top of Fairview Canyon. Many people ski that little portion, drop off at the top, and then their driver circles down below and picks them up. It poses a danger to drivers on that road. A couple of individuals are trying to raise money to put in a tow rope and a parking lot and avoid just some of those traffic issues. They are looking for participating individuals, such as a mayor in West Jordan or Draper, who owns some property in Gooseberry Estates and said he witnessed a head-on collision one day. They threw out the idea of \$10 a day or \$100 for a season to keep things operating and not make it too expensive. The issue about parking came up years ago, and it came before this council, and there was a lot of discussion, and then it kind of went away because it's not in Emery County; something needs to happen before something gets killed there. It has pros and cons, and that's why we are soliciting input from the public. Cost around 2 million dollars.

The forest plan is continuing forward; we're going through content analysis. We had two recent objections to one of our skyline timber projects, so we're holding on to that project until after the summer, before we proceed forward again. We've not dropped, but are on hold while addressing those objections and our prescribed forest fire.

Projects are picking up, nine more guzzlers will be placed on the sand pitch, over towards Fountain Green, Levan area, on that mountain range.

Sage grouse numbers finish that since our last public lands meeting, numbers up on Horn Mountain were better this year, maybe not drastically, our numbers on Wildcat were average, if not slightly lower. We did a blitz on Wildcat to see if we're missing some areas.

Ferron's gate is open, as well as Wrigley and Stevens Creek. We continue to watch that closely; the lower country was snow-free earlier than usual. However, even with that, our gates are very consistent too. I wish I had brought the map we give out for free, which we refer to as our motor vehicle use map. We have dates for when those gates will open, and that's been over a couple of decades, fine-tuning it. I think our next series of gates will open on the 20th and then June 1st, and the majority of things will be open by those dates, other than maybe the South Skyline Road and Trout Springs.

They've met with a lot of the range permittees. Wood permits, go on sale June 1st.

At the fairgrounds, a Forest Service plan meeting is scheduled for May 28th in Price.

### **Trust Lands Administration (TLA)**

First of all, I want to report on our board tour that happened in the middle of April. I'd like to thank the Emery County Commissioners who attended the board meeting and the board tour. We saw the Drunkards Wash oil and gas thing going on with Urban. I would convey and report back to this group that we recently did a carbon sequestration deal with them, and it will extend that field's life by decades.

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

No one in attendance

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

Dal Gray reported that carbon sequestration stuff is considered a Class 6 regulation. They will be going to the board on the 28th of May for our enforcement rules, so that the State of Utah can govern and regulate that aspect. We're waiting on the Bronco mine, the mining side of things, like their mining proposal of the new civil leases, and when this will take effect.

The abandoned mine program is waiting for federal funding to help. The fire in the Old Wattis and Kenilworth, places in Carbon County, has put a hold on how they will address the fires in that situation.

The lithium lease in Green River. Where do you want to know about it? I believe they are working on a class four permit, which is what that one is, and that has to go through the EPA for them to solve mine. There is one other company out there that has filed to do another one of those wells, just a little bit further south of the one existing now, and it's still in the works.

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

Kyle Beagley reported that he got a call from Urban, and we're doing some follow-up stuff on pore space leasing. So there's oil and gas and mining, working with the EPA to get the state primacy to authorize class six injection wells, CO2 carbon sequestration wells. They go very deep, and the authorities put some strong contaminants down in the ground, so those wells will likely be in Emery County and Carbon County, and they'll be either on private or state land. It's a lengthy process.

I spoke with Elijah our district manager yesterday and just asked to go over the emergency procedure process Department of Interior came out with a couple weeks ago with you know people can apply for an emergency procedure NEPA expedited process and what that looks like is projects that seek to identify lease site produce transport refine or generate crude oil natural gas lease condensates, natural gas liquids, refined petroleum products, and uranium coal, biofuels, geothermal heat, the kinetic movement of flowing water or critical minerals is defined in a regulation in a CFR, or that seek to use

energy to generate electricity, thermal power, or transmit electricity from a site of generation, so these are the types of projects that can apply for an emergency process, and that gives if it has to be approved through the Secretary of the Department of Interior gets approval it gives us 14 days to process that. For an EIS, it gives us 28 days to process. We're figuring out if it will affect us and in what way on the land exchange.

We received a note that solicitors have approved the final title opinion, so we can start managing the lands. Everything will be trickling out, so like permits with many of those combined with the state parcel and BLM, those will have to adjust to the BLM, I believe, 182 complete state sections.

Land sale for the Hunter Power Plant for long-term recreation.

Wild horses and burros were then discussed. There are supposed to be 117, but more than 300 heads are there, making the population 115% more than it should be. A gathering is planned for 2026, and this is under the Department of the Interior.

There was a question about the dogs in the desert. Kyle replied that 12 dogs had been rounded up, and it appeared that someone had abandoned them in the desert. Tourists have reported seeing them and called the sheriff.

### **PLPCO**

Nicole Nielson stated that if there are any concerns about the Manti LaSal Forest Plan, the Commissioners should let her know since she is working on that. She is also working on the Emery County General Plan and asked if there are any concerns.

### **Washington Delegation Staff**

Larry Ellertson reported that the Congressional Review Act says that many of the things we've implemented by executive order and by plans that have closed lands will be reviewed to overturn them. Legislation that they expect to be voted on tomorrow would repeal the closure of that 25-mile section in the Lake Powell Recreation Area. Where do we need help changing some of these restrictions? Where's Washington on this? We have been pleading for years and for decades, but we have never heard from Washington about it. What action would they take to solve it? They're the ones who have the authority to help us in there. Right now, they keep pouring money into it to allow the captures, feed them, and keep them. But you're going beyond that and saying we must solve the problem, but we never hear from Washington. Larry stated that rather than him speculate where they're at, let me find out and I'll get back to you at your next meeting.

## **7. Commission Comments on Public Land Items**

Commissioner Leonard gives a minor update on the Cleveland Reservoir—the north side, where private property has been closed off. Signs were changed yesterday, and the public is allowed out there again. The landowner posted some signs that the county attorney's been involved.

I don't know where this is going to end up. As of yesterday, there are five access roads down in there. They opened up two of them, and there's a sign.

What about the road in the Green River area? Okay. The county's litigating that. They went down and took a bunch of depositions of people who had used the roads over the years. They've sent information to the landowners saying that's the county right-of-way and here's all the proof we've got. So the legal process is driving through on that. It's underway. Where it will end up, I don't know. Right now, the model are in their court. Just a month ago, they sent the result of their depositions down. It is public if you can show ten years of continuous use at any point.

#### **8. Additional Issues From Council Members**

Precipitation today is 101%. But it's been the most unusual spring I've seen in my lifetime. If you watch the river, there's been very little, just when they flush the spillway, where they clean it. And there hasn't been one day, talking to the manager who controls going into Huntington, that he hasn't been able to put the water in Huntington. The reservoir at Cleveland is only 57% full, Jones Valley is 79%, and Millsite is 50%.

#### **9. Concerned Citizens with Emery County-related issues**

Nothing at this time.

#### **10. Adjourn**