

Meeting Minutes
Emery County Public Lands Council
March 4, 2025
10:00 AM

PLC: Rod Player, Ray Petersen, Bruce Wilson, Leon McElprang, Rod Player, Varian Allen, Travis Richards, Kim McFarlane.

Excused: Sherrel Ward

PL STAFF: Jim Jennings (ECPL), Jan Olsen

VISITOR: Jordan Leonard, Commissioner; Keven Jensen, Commissioner; Dennis Worwood, Commissioner; Kyle Beagley, Nick LaFazio & Jaydon Mead (BLM); Dal Gray, Mark Gwynn (DOGM); Nicole Nielson (PLPCO); Wayne Ludington (SRBCH); Darren Olsen (USFS); Larry Ellertson (Sen Curtis), Ryan Jones (UDAF); ShiAnne Larsen (DWR) Don and Terri Bennett (EC Trails) Ed Geary (public);

Electronically: Andy Gordon, Ben Grimes, Les Wilberg, Bryan Torgerson (SITLA); Julie Johansen (ETV).

1. Welcome

Chairman Rod Player welcomed everyone to the meeting. We have a presentation that will take place here in just a few minutes.

2. Approval of Minutes for February 4, 2025.

Varian Allen motioned to approve the February minutes, and Ray Peterson seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

3. Discussion about the completion of the Lands Exchange

Follow-up is all that is needed, and that process can take up to a year to get everything signed.

4. Discussion about Solar Panels on Federal Lands

Kyle Beagley handed out a map of all federal lands (areas marked in pink/purple), and there is no solar on federal lands now. (Red/ marks) are identified as available for application with many approval conditions, and there are no applications now. Everything you see in green on the maps is land available for application. Solar applications require them to be within 15 miles of existing or proposed transmission lines. Exclude development in areas with a high likelihood of resource conflict, including sensitive wildlife or cultural, projects that are five megawatts or larger and connect to the grid, allow solar development applications in areas with up to 10% slope, and ensure the project requirements to avoid, minimize, and compensate for adverse impact.

Leon McElprang stated the most significant issue for him would be the effects on grazing allotments. Our mission statement is multiple use. Grazing is affecting the food source of America. This is terrible. What is going to be done with our agricultural community in the county? And I'll tell you this is another bold statement, but agriculture blankets everything. We, the board members, are not okay with putting solar panels on Federal Land.

Emery County's general plan states that we're okay with solar panels on public land. The general plan this is from 2016 there's nothing about wild horses, there's a little bit about complying with BLM encouraging other agencies to comply with their policy, but there's nothing specific about wild horses and so the desire is to have a resolution that would be proactive in trying to stop a project area. We mentioned transmission lines, the energy field is changing even in the legislature this year, and the idea of a company buying and generating their power, with batteries, you could probably hook into your power without a transmission line.

5. Discussion/Decision on a possible resolution and/or Bill concerning the establishment of National Monuments under the Antiquities Act needing authorization by Congress.

New Mexico sent a letter to the Public Lands Council requesting if the county is interested in passing a resolution establishing or extending a national monument, which may be undertaken only by express authorization of Congress.

The Antiquities Act itself addresses the size that only the smallest amount is needed to protect the issues that are at risk. No one knows what the smallest amount is. Some places are hundreds of thousands of acres.

As the board, Kim McFarlane recommends that we make a motion to ask the county Attorney Mike Olsen to write a resolution stating that we are in favor of stopping the State of Utah from adding more monuments to Utah and that it would need approval of Congress and consent of the local government and have a specific amount of acres, Varian Allen seconded the motion, the motion carried.

We are in favor of what New Mexico is doing with their resolution.

6. Agency Reports and Council Member Comments

Utah State Department of Agriculture

Ryan Jones reported that they are doing applications from March 1 - April 15, 2025. Utah Pollinator Program, a 2024 webinar will be held March 26, 2025, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

The Agricultural Voluntary Incentive Program is a voluntary, incentive-based program to help producers to implement best management practices, no matter where they are on their conservation journey.

Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation

No one in attendance

Division of Water Rights (DWRi)

No one in attendance

Utah State Parks

Not in attendance

Manti-LaSal National Forest (MLNF)

Darrin Olsen reported that they have terminated seven people, Wade Allenson, and the rec crew.

Skyline Hempera, Healthy Forest Restoration Act. We came in and talked about the project. We received an objection to that, so we're working through that process with the groups that objected to it.

Also, our forest-wide prescribed fire EA is being litigated.

Otherwise, range-wise, it's that time of year we're starting to have our spring meetings, meeting with the permittees about the grazing season.

We have started closing gates. We have shut Ferron Canyon, and possibly Millers, and Cottonwood.

Wattis Mine Fire Project, there is still a fire just north of Star Point, Carbon County, and Emery, which is not too far. The state of Utah, Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining, wants to look at how extensive that is. They will go out and drill nine holes using a helicopter and want to do that work in early June. Eight of those holes are in the forest, and one is just off.

Our rec group is planning to go out and help with the BLM, Do some trail work and widen the trail out there in a couple of days.

Sage-grouse counts will be starting. It's usually mid-March through the 1st of May.

Darren, what would it take to follow up on what Leon said last month, and expand to the mom and pop's timber operators in the little backyard sawmill, and those who want to do firewood? Just sitting down and deciding. We've done some of that in the past, working through some of the bigger groups that have purchased some of those sales.

Trust Lands Administration (TLA)

Bryan Torgerson stated that if you want to refresh your memory, just go to Trust Lands, and then there's a link called Exchanges, and then you can go to the Dingle app.

We will have our board tour and board meeting in this area on April 16th and 17th. They will examine the Bronco Coal Mine, the Horn Shadow Solar Field, the Urban Oil and Gas Field, and the Drunkard's Wash.

We're also selling one parcel in the springtime, and that auction's in June. That parcel is kind of by the Hats Ranch, down in that area of Emery County.

Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR)

ShiAnne Larsen reports we have just a few things. Ice conditions are soft on our mid-water elevations, but ice is off most of the lower parts.

Big game application period opens on March 20th and runs through April 24th. Biologists are working on big game permits and the recommendation for our April RAC meeting, which is on April 16th at 6 PM in Green River at the John Wesley Powell Museum.

USUE is hosting our 3D NASP, shooting tournament. 305 shooters were registered, and all of those participants were from Emery and Carbon County, which were involved in those schools. That takes place on March 27th through the 29th. Emery's first year is going to the state for shooting, which is Canyonview Middle School.

Sago Trailhead, there is no agreement in place with the DWR or the tribe yet. DWR is very supportive of an agreement being put in place, but it's ultimately up to the tribe to decide how that goes. We are fielding many calls from the public regarding public access to the roadless area of the Book Cliffs. We've been advised that those calls must be directed to the tribe's fish and wildlife department. This is the process you need to go through to obtain a permit. We are told it's unlikely that any non-tribal members will receive a permit, but we're still suggesting that you reach out and call them because there is a possibility that you could receive one.

Updates with the Cleveland Reservoir litigation: We are waiting for an update from our county attorney. Emery County's goal is to fight for public access.

Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining (DOGM)

One point of interest for you guys is that Fossil Rock has applied for a permit to upgrade their surface to get product out quicker and better.

They will be utilizing that road more and will have more traffic up and down the canyon as well.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

Through the exchange, the state of Utah will gain 47 water rights. 83,000 acres with subsurface mineral estates, 4,000 surface-only acres, and 5,000 acres of subsurface mineral, oil and gas, and coal-only estates. The parcels being conveyed to Utah are estimated to contain approximately 32 million recoverable tons of coal. Approximately two and a half million barrels of oil and 25,800 million cubic feet of natural gas. Those are estimates. In exchange for the mineral deposits and all of that, the BLM will receive approximately 116,000 acres of isolated state lands within many of the protected wilderness areas and the Center of the Swells Rec Area of the Dingell Act.

Here is an idea of what everyone was involved with. I know that we had to go out and survey the parcels coming to BLM, and in total there were 209 parcels. If you do the math, though, 116,000 acres divided by 640 acres are 181 complete sections. A lot of those Parcels

were not complete sections. That's why there are more than 181 parcels in total that come into BLM.

<https://www.blm.gov/press-release>

No San Rafael Swell Rack meeting this month. Jurassic National Monument will open March 27th. We are moving forward with that building replacement project, so there will likely be more information to come as we progress.

PLPCO

Nicole Nielson reports multiple executive orders, like the one that was mentioned, and the one about immediate expansion of the timber production.

The Secretary of the Interior and Agriculture to start looking at ways to streamline that. Some of that's about ESA, like streamlining that, but part of it is using categorical exclusions or CE's to do more timber products.

GOYO or the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity has loans that are zero percent loans or grants for rural economic development, and we've talked about, you know, those being around timber production.

The Department of the Interior and Agriculture is expanding its timber production and sales.

Another update that I wanted to bring is that one of the bills that is more than likely going to pass at the Utah Legislature this year, HB 439, addresses the grants through Division of Outdoor Rec, specifically the OHV fund.

It allows the counties of the third and the sixth class to get those grants and have them as upfront grants instead of, you know, reimbursable. Now you can have those funds up front, and they know that impacts rural communities. Grants that are submitted right now are due March 31st.

The Department of Ag and PLPCO are starting to work with federal agencies to do meetings. Some of the things they're going to do there are having conversations with federal agencies and permittees. The State of Utah is going to come and do a presentation on things that they can help with, such as veg management, and give permittees examples of things they can do to help during the drought situation.

Utah legislature, there is HB 241, kind of addresses solar and it's Actually, about solar incentives and what the state will give to solar companies, but it kind of restricts, and some of the language in there is, won't provide incentives if it's on farmland, grazing land that has a production of X amount according to the NRCS's web soil survey.

Washington Delegation Staff

Larry Ellertson mentioned that he has brought legislation forward that attempts to control China's theft of IT. That's a real issue, and Congress is very concerned about it, as a lot of the public would be as well.

Catastrophic Wildland Fire Protection Act, looks at past practices, past meanings in the past, and current practices to determine the best practices to follow going forward.

I think I mentioned before that he had a bill to repeal the death tax or the inheritance tax and to reduce gift tax from 40% to 35%.

He also is concerned, as many of us are, about critical minerals, and apparently it matters if it's on the list. Therefore, the legislation requires that the critical minerals be consistent with the critical materials list to identify the material. Now, somebody in the state of Utah can tell you that we have many of those critical minerals in the state of Utah.

Please let the Senator know that these job cuts are killing us. It will cause irreparable damage to the resources that are here. Okay, well, I'll pass it on in general terms, and if you have specifics, don't hesitate to get them to me.

7. Commission Comments on Public Land Items

Nothing more at this time

8. Additional Issues From Council Members

Rod Player stated, I don't know if you've all seen this, but they've been kicking around the idea again of making state parks throughout the state, and one of the areas that they're talking about is the San Rafael Swell. They're talking about other places, but they're kicking around the idea of the San Rafael Recreation Area being a state park. They proposed that everything south of I-70 should be a state park, and we had to go to Washington and literally oppose the legislation.

9. Concerned Citizens with Emery County-related issues

Nothing at this time.

10. Adjourn