



OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE ADVISORY COUNCIL DIVISION OF OUTDOOR RECREATION DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DRAFT

*Minutes Of The Meeting Held on August 6, 2025, at 11:00 a.m.
Virtual*

HOST: *Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation
Virtual*

ATTENDEES

OHV Council Members

Present:

Jason Blankenagel (Chair)
Eric Nelson (Vice-Chair)
Brody Johnson
Scott Wheeler
Mike Cook
Cheryl Butler
Nicole Nielson
Brett Davis
Dave Jacobson
Kirk Chester

Absent:

Nathan Curtis
Bonnie McCallister

Division of Outdoor Recreation:

Rachel Toker
Jorge Vazquez
Patrick Morrison
Maureen Casper

Visitors:

Brett Stewart

Audio/video recording of this meeting is located at:

Off-Highway Vehicle Advisory Council 8/6/2025 (re-post)

The original 'LIVE' stream was interrupted with inappropriate material and removed. This replacement video is clean of offensive content and suitable for all ages.

TIME AGENDA ITEM AND SUMMARY

0:00 1. WELCOME

1.1. Call to Order

The Off-Highway Vehicle Advisory (OHV) Council Chair, Jason Blankenagel, called the meeting to order, and OHV Grant Administrator Rachel Toker recorded the minutes. Ms. Toker also took attendance of the council members present. With a quorum of council members in attendance, the meeting proceeded with its agenda.

1.2. Attendance and Introductions

Chair Blankenagel introduced himself to the council and everyone in attendance. He then asked everyone in attendance to introduce themselves. Council members provided their names and affiliations for the record.

Ms. Toker clarified that the meeting served as a pre-scoring session, a practice common for other grants, to review any changes in the grant cycle, identify trends, and ensure the advisory council was aware of their assignments and any potential conflicts of interest



before the evaluation process. She emphasized the short turnaround time for the council's recommendations and expressed hope that this meeting would adequately prepare them.

8:00

2. COUNCIL & APPLICANT SURVEY RESULTS

Ms. Toker presented the results of a survey distributed to the advisory council and applicants, noting that council members gave an overall satisfaction score of 3.8 out of 5. Key concerns included perceived favoritism, rushed discussions, and meeting structures, with only 44% feeling the review method was fair and comprehensive. Recommendations to address these issues included creating standardized motions, developing a rubric, implementing pre-screening steps, improving time management, and fostering a culture of respect. Applicant feedback indicated that 91% had applied previously, though newcomers faced challenges due to unclear instructions or a lack of awareness. Common barriers included budgeting, gathering required documents, limited staff capacity, and time constraints. While support and communication scored 3.34 out of 4, 34% of applicants found guidance unclear, and only 55% perceived the review process as fair and transparent. Recommendations included providing clearer guidance, simplifying budgeting, improving outreach and accessibility, and increasing council transparency through publishing rubrics and live-streaming meetings.

Based on this feedback, Ms. Toker outlined action plans for applicants, including quarterly webinars, office hours, a uniform budget template, and a revised program guide. She expressed hesitancy about providing a "strong application" example due to concerns that applicants might simply copy it, but was open to council input. Council member Brody Johnson requested access to anonymized applicant comments to better understand fairness concerns, which Ms. Toker confirmed could be shared later in the week. The council debated ways to improve applicant understanding, including Recreation Program Director Patrick Morrison's suggestion of an annotated sample application to clarify expectations, which Ms. Toker supported pursuing collaboratively after the current grant cycle.

Discussions also addressed reviewer transparency, application timelines, and maintaining fairness. Mr. Johnson suggested revealing reviewer identities to applicants, while others expressed concern that this could lead to undue influence. The assignment of applications after the due date was explained as a measure to ensure equal workload and fairness. Council members emphasized the importance of a level playing field, noting that these competitive grants require simultaneous review of all applications, unlike non-competitive legislative processes. To address time constraints, it was suggested to extend the review period from two to three or four weeks in the next cycle to allow more thorough evaluation.

40:30

3. REVIEW OF FY25 PROJECTS

Ms. Toker presented an overview of the Fiscal Year 2025 projects, noting that of the \$5.1 million requested, \$4.4 million was awarded, resulting in over \$6 million on the ground when including matching funds. This funding supported 89% of projects—an 8% increase from previous years—with the majority allocated to trail work, followed by search and rescue, education, and tourism. Funds were distributed across all 29 counties, predominantly to Cache County, with most applications submitted by counties and nonprofit organizations.

Ms. Toker also reviewed historical funding trends from 2020 to 2025, highlighting that over \$33 million had been requested and nearly \$23 million put on the ground. She explained a recent decrease in available funding due to limited rollover funds and discussed efforts to

secure a \$6 million annual building block request from the governor to meet demand and prevent excess funds. Trail work has historically received the most funding, with newer categories like snowmobile projects and land acquisition emerging. Council member David Jacobson inquired about tracking project-specific outputs, such as miles of trail improved or equipment purchased, and Ms. Toker confirmed that Salesforce enables this level of detail. Mr. Morrison added that Motorized Recreation Grant Analyst Jorge Vazquez is compiling historic data into a live story mapping asset, searchable by categories such as counties and legislative districts.

50:45 4. REVIEW OF NEW GRANT POLICIES

Chair Blankenagel requested a review of new grant policies, which Ms. Toker confirmed was necessary before moving on. She discussed a policy change allowing 100% upfront funding for entities in rural county classifications (three through five) based on a legislative update, contingent on incremental disbursements and guarantees of project completion and reporting. Other requested rule changes will be addressed at the next advisory council meeting or during the second quarter. Ms. Toker also mentioned updates to the 23-page program guide, including revised dates, removal of the mandatory 15-minute consultation for projects exceeding \$350,000, and the incorporation of a new matching scale and flat rates for Search and Rescue (SAR). She emphasized the need for mandatory letters of support from local user groups for SAR applications and noted that radios will be added to the SAR flat rate after consultation with council member Sheriff Curtis. Changes to the year-round Land Acquisition Grant and equipment repair policies were also highlighted, with plans to consult legal counsel to ensure proper procedures.

Ms. Toker addressed concerns regarding gift cards and fuel reimbursements, explaining that gift cards are difficult to track for audit purposes, and clarified that the state prefers reimbursement via mileage rates covering fuel and wear and tear. She also announced the removal of the "statement of responsibility" requirement, streamlined budget formats integrating reimbursement documents and volunteer spreadsheets, and the implementation of new scoring criteria to enhance transparency for applicants competing across funding categories. Council members raised additional points, including prioritizing access protection over trail maintenance, political engagement on travel plans or administrative changes, and ensuring land acquisition processes align with the state resource plan. Ms. Toker confirmed she would involve legal counsel to ensure compliance and avoid potential issues.

1:18:30 MEETING INTERRUPTION

The meeting was briefly interrupted by an unknown participant who made inappropriate comments. Department staff quickly muted the participant, secured the meeting, and suspended the recording for transparency. The meeting resumed after the situation was addressed, and a redacted version of the recording was reposted.

1:21:30 5. FY26 Q1 OHVR CYCLE REQUESTS & FUNDING

1:21:45 5.1. Overview

Chair Blankenagel moved on to item number five, discussing fiscal year 26, quarter 1 grant requests and funding. Ms. Toker reported that 34 applications had been received, totaling \$2.6 million in requests, and all had been assigned to reviewers. She asked reviewers to verify their assigned grants against the list and report any conflicts of interest or requests for changes.

Ms. Toker highlighted several key items in the grant review process. She noted that the Duck Creek Village Legacy application's eligibility was being researched by legal counsel, with the county's willingness to take on the project potentially qualifying it. She also observed that three OHV tourism grant applications were submitted. Ms. Toker called on Mr. Cook from Uintah County to provide additional context on the Uintah County Travel and Tourism application. Mr. Cook explained that a contractor is assisting with website and advertising projects. Ms. Toker advised the council to monitor this trend, as similar situations in the past led to reduced tourism funding. She also noted a trend of e-bikes in Search and Rescue applications, explaining that e-bikes over 750 watts are considered motorized and suggesting that reviewers with dirt bike expertise be assigned to these applications.

Additional items included a Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office drone request exceeding the flat rate, which would require a five-minute virtual presentation to justify the need, and a Wayne County trail route application over \$350,000, prompting discussion on requiring all council members to review larger grants in person. Brody Johnson raised concerns about Fremont Indian State Park's trail crew request, which involved general maintenance tasks rather than larger trail projects. The council discussed the review process for large grants, agreeing that all members should familiarize themselves with applications over \$350,000. A lead reviewer would be assigned to conduct thorough research, including potential site visits, before voting.

1:40:30 5.2. Review of Assigned Evaluators

Chair Blankenagel clarified that grant applications are accessible in a Google Drive folder, though they may not appear in the portal unless assigned. Ms. Toker offered to download and share the full application folders directly with the council to provide easier access to all attachments and complete applications, and Chair Blankenagel supported sharing a direct link via email.

1:42:15 5.3. Salesforce Evaluator Refresh

Mr. Morrison provided an evaluator refresh, guiding council members through the portal and the process for reviewing and scoring grant applications. He emphasized technical details like page size settings to ensure all applications are visible and reminded evaluators that leaving a required score field blank results in a zero. He also addressed concerns about public visibility of comments, confirming that names would be redacted but comments could be shared, and encouraged maintaining a constructive tone.

The discussion also covered scoring discrepancies and ineligible projects, with evaluators advised to clearly state reasons for not funding an application, even if well-written, and to provide helpful feedback. Ms. Toker recommended using a spreadsheet to maintain scoring consistency and guided evaluation applications based on budget, community benefit, and a 1-to-5 scoring scale. Access protection grant prioritization was also discussed, with emphasis on potentially increasing focus on these grants while acknowledging legal limitations, including Utah incorporation requirements, and exploring ways to expand application opportunities.

1:57:00 5.4. Grant Review Timeline

Ms. Toker outlined the timeline for the upcoming meeting, noting that the draft agenda would be sent on the 15th, reviews were due on the 18th, and the full meeting packet would be distributed on the 19th. She confirmed that the advisory council meeting is tentatively scheduled at Utah Lake State Park from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM, with lunch provided, and explained that following the meeting, recommendations would be sent to directors for approval, with contracts typically issued one to two weeks later.

1:58:30 5.5. Council Requests for Scoring Meeting

Due to time constraints, the council proceeded to the next agenda item.

1:59:00 6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Blankenagel moved to public comment, but Department staff noted that public participation was not possible due to an earlier incident and that no votes would be taken.

1:59:30 7. ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned.