UTAH DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

State of Utah
Fish Health Policy Board
October 1, 2025
1:00 – 2:30 PM
UDAF offices
Taylorsville, UT
Conference Room #2508

Teleconference link: https://tel.meet/myd-fetf-esj?pin=1044021855935
Join by phone: (US) +1 219-281-4414 PIN: 599 035 977#

This meeting will be conducted in person and via electronic means. Here is the available link to the public for live broadcast and on-demand viewing: https://tel.meet/myd-fetf-esj?pin=1044021855935

If you do not have access to the Internet, you can join via telephone calling: (US) +1 219-281-4414 and using meeting PIN: 599 035 977

AGENDA

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER – WADE CAVENDER, CHAIR.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE FHPB: [action Item]
    - May 28, 2025 FHPB meeting (Handout)

4. Aquatic Animal Health Policy Movement Updates [discussion item]
    - Presented by Christi Swan on behalf of UDWR.

5. WOUNDFIN VARIANCE [action item]
    - Randy Oplinger and Melinda Bennion presenting on behalf of UDWR.

6. LOVELAND LIVING PLANET AQUARIUM VARIANCE [action item]
    - Anthony Siegle presenting on behalf of LLPA.

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS [discussion item]
    - No announcements at this time.

8. ADJOURN

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE AMERICAN DISABILITIES ACT, INDIVIDUALS NEEDING ACCOMODATIONS DURING THIS MEETING SHOULD CONTACT UDAF AT 801-982-2200. AT LEAST THREE WORKING DAYS PRIOR TO THE MEETING. HEARING IMPAIRED INDIVIDUALS SHOULD CALL UTAH RELAY SERVICE AT 801-298-9484 OR 1-800-364-4128

UTAH DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

State of Utah
Fish Health Policy Board
May 28, 2025
2:00 – 3:30 PM
UDAF offices
Taylorsville, UT
Conference Room #2508

Teleconference link: https://meet.google.com/kzh-asaz-wvu
Join by phone: (US) +1 225-424-8023 PIN: 875 124 582#

This meeting will be conducted in person and via electronic means. Here is the available link to the public for live broadcast and on-demand viewing: https://tel.meet/kzh-asaz-wvu?pin=2881572709261

If you do not have access to the Internet, you can join via telephone calling: (US) +1 225-424-8023 and using meeting PIN: 875 124 582#

AGENDA

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER – WADE CAVENDER, CHAIR.

    - Wade Cavender called the Fish Health Policy Board meeting to order for May 28th, 2025. Introductions were made, including Amanda Price, Xavier Matheson, Dr. Albert Martinez, Curtis Grow, Cammy Ovaleni, Mike Canning, Chad Teal, Robert Shields, Randy Oplinger, Christine Swan, Chance Broderius, and Tyler Coleman.

    - Wade Cavender welcomed Tyler Coleman, the new lower Bear River project manager at Trout Unlimited, to the board, filling the one open position. Tyler shared his background in fisheries and aquatic sciences.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE FHPB: [action Item]
    - January 15, 2025 FHPB meeting (Handout)

    - Xavier Matheson proposed several grammatical and spelling corrections to the minutes from January 15, 2025. Mike Canning made a motion to approve the minutes with these changes,

and Chad Teal seconded the motion. The minutes were approved and the updates can be found on the public notice website.

- Wade Cavender inquired about ethics training for Tyler Coleman, who was not present at the previous meeting. Xavier Matheson stated they would send Tyler a welcome packet and arrange a meeting with Curtis Grow to provide the necessary training.

4. GREEN SUCKER VARIANCE [action item]
    - Robert Shields presenting on behalf of UDWR and AAHRC (Aquatic Animal Health Research Center).
    - Robert Shields presented a variance request for the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and Utah State University. This was a project focused on thiamine deficiency in the Weber River and its impact on green suckers. Robert explained the issue of thiaminase in prey fish leading to thiamine deficiency complex in predators, causing low survival and deformities in offspring. The project involves moving fertilized green sucker eggs to the AARHC Laboratory to study treatments and the prevalence of thiamine deficiency. Chad Teal added that the project will also develop an LC50 curve for thiamine in green suckers for future monitoring. Xavier Matheson made a motion to approve the variance as written, and Robert Shields seconded the motion. The motion to approve the green sucker variance was passed.
5. MATHESON LAKE VARIANCE [action item]
    - Randy Oplinger presenting on behalf of UDWR.
    - Randy Oplinger presented two similar variance requests for Stewart Lake and Matheson Wetland, both adjacent to rivers with federally listed fish species (razorback sucker, Colorado pike minnow, bony tailed chub, and humpback chub). These wetlands serve as nursery habitats, and the variance is needed to translocate native fish, primarily razorback suckers, back to the Green or Colorado Rivers after the wetlands are drained to remove non-native species. The translocation is necessary due to low flows and poor water quality in the outlet channels after draining. Wade Cavender noted the low biological risk and the similarity to a previous San Juan River variance. Chad Teal suggested including all native fish species in the variance, which Randy Oplinger agreed would be beneficial. Chad Teal made a motion to approve the variance to move all native fishes from the entrapped areas back to their rivers, and Xavier Matheson seconded the motion. The motion to approve both the Stewart Lake and Matheson Wetland variances with the added modification passed.

6. STEWART LAKE VARIANCE [action item]
    - Randy Oplinger presenting on behalf of UDWR.
    - See above summary

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS [discussion item]

- No announcements at this time.
- Xavier Matheson stated there were no announcements. Wade Cavender proposed tentatively planning the next meeting for the fall (September or October) and scheduling it based on the need for discussion items. This was agreed upon. Dr. Robert Martinez made a motion to adjourn, and Tylynn Griffin seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

8. ADJOURN

Variance Proposal
Utah Fish Health Policy Board

Requestor Name & Company: Randy Oplinger Date: 09/1/2025

Address, Phone, Email, Fax: 1585 North Temple, Salt Lake City, UT 84114

Description of variance proposal (short description of specifics for the proposal)

Beginning date: 10/1/25 Ending date: 10/1/27

Species, size, & numbers:

Woundfin (Plagopterus argentissimus), all sizes, up to 1,000 fish

Source (include UTM or HUC): Virgin River drainage (HUCs 15010008 and 15010010) and/or SNARRC (13 S 560496 3673049)

Destination (include UTM or HUC): AAHRC (12 T 427669 4620891) or SNARRC (13 S 560496 3673049)

Description of proposed activity:

Prevent extinction of Woundfin by establishing a variance that allows the UDWR to collect Woundfin for the purposes of establishing a second broodstock at Aquatic Animal Health and Research Center (AAHRC) or supplementing an existing broodstock at the Southwest Native Aquatic Resource and Recovery Center (SNARCC) in Dexter, NM. This variance covers a broad range of scenarios that could occur pending the encounter of an adequate number of Woundfin. See the supplemental flowchart for a description of all possible collection scenarios.

Disposal and decontamination (fish disposal and facility decontamination methods):

No fish disposal will occur.

Reason (why this varies from R58-17. You may wish to contact UDAF (801 538 7029) if assistance with R58-17 is needed):

We are requesting a variance because Woundfin have become critically endangered in the wild. Extensive sampling in 2025 has resulted in the detection of only a small number of adult Woundfin (n=8) in the Virgin River in Utah, Arizona, and Nevada. In addition, approximately 98.8% of the broodstock at SNARCC were lost in a mortality event during winter 2024. In order to prevent extinction, the UDWR and partners would like to establish a second broodstock at the AAHRC and supplement the existing broodstock at SNARRC. These actions will help the UDWR and partners facilitate additional production and stocking efforts to assist in recovering and conserving this species.

Scientific rationale (scientific reasons upon which the variance is based):

Extinction of Woundfin could occur if actions are not taken to protect the species. Woundfin are too rare in the wild to collect 60 total samples for fish health testing. Woundfin are short lived (<2 years in the wild), creating urgency behind this augmentation and conservation effort.

Inspection history (inspection history for the source, destination, and species or enter "none" if not applicable):

1. Virgin River: This variance request would cover the collection of Woundfin from the Virgin River in Arizona and Nevada. The species is not health certified in those states. Cyprinid fishes in the Utah portion of the Virgin River are inspected and health certified on a yearly basis and have been for over 10 years.
2. SNARCC: Captive Woundfin at the The Southwestern Native Aquatic Resources and Recovery Center were certified through September 10, 2025 but were not health inspected or re-certified due to low numbers after loss of fish at the facility.
3. AAHRC: The Aquatic Animal Health and Research Center has health certifications for multiple species and is inspected and certified on a yearly basis. There is no current health certification for cyprinids at the facility.

Benefit (how the variance would benefit you, the Utah aquaculture industry, the public, and/or public fishery resources):

This variance could be critical to the recovery and conservation of the species. It is possible that Woundfin could become extinct if immediate action is not taken.

Risk (potential harm the variance may cause to the Utah aquaculture industry or public fishery resources, etc.):

None of the actions that could potentially be taken are near any private aquaculture facilities and risk from possible actions is very low.

Funding (sources of funding that will be used, i.e., own financing, research, private, state, etc.):

This work will be funded by the Virgin River Resource Management and Recovery Program.

Names (contact information for companies or persons who have agreed to work with you or speak in favor of the variance):

Name: Melinda Bennion Company: Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

Address:

Phone: 435-619-1229 Email: melindabennion@utah.gov

Name: Company:

Address:

Phone: Email:

Stipulations required by the Board:

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Regulatory authority/contact: UDAF ☐ UDWR ☐

Comment:

Approval: Yes ○ No ○ Letter ○

Reset Form

Supplemental Information for Woundfin Variance

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) and partners have observed very low numbers of Woundfin *(Plagopterus argentissimus)* in the Virgin River drainage in 2025 (i.e., >2,000 seine hauls have yielded 8 Woundfin). In addition, there was a significant mortality event at Southwestern Native Aquatic Resources and Recovery Center (SNARRC) where approximately 97% of the Woundfin being held at the facility were lost; this is the only facility with broodstock and production fish of this species. These factors coupled with their short life span (<2 yrs in the wild), place this species at a high risk of becoming extinct if immediate conservation actions are not taken.

The UDWR and partners see an urgent need to establish a second broodstock at the Aquatic Animal Health and Research Center (AAHRC) and to bolster brood numbers at SNARRC. The first step was taken to bolster broodstock at AAHRC when four Woundfin at the Loveland Living Planet Aquarium were transferred to AAHRC on August 6, 2025, in accordance with Utah's Aquatic Animal Health Waiver Policy.

To increase Woundfin numbers at the AAHRC, there are a few possible sources where a wild collection can be attempted and a captive population where additional transfers can be considered. These options are summarized below:

1. Wild populations: Utah (health certified annually - current DWR 24-097), Arizona and Nevada (neither are health certified).
2. Captive: SNARRC has young of year Woundfin (number not currently known, but ~200 fish) that were produced from the broodstock remaining after the mortality event. Woundfin at SNARRC were health certified through September 20, 2025 but because of the catastrophic loss of fish, numbers were too low to allow for continued health testing.

The intent of this variance request is to allow the UDWR to carry out actions that are intended to prevent the extinction of Woundfin. Those actions include:

1. The collection of fish from out-of-state sources that lack health certification.
    a. Fish may be imported from Arizona or Nevada into Utah, once import permit requirements have been addressed through the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF).

    b. There are a number of possible movement scenarios and these scenarios are described in Figure 1.

2. Allowing the movement of fish among water sources including a temporary holding facility in Washington County. The actual collection and movement of fish will be opportunistic and will largely be driven by where fish are encountered and other logistics like staff availability.
3. The transfer of non-health certified fish from SNARRC to AAHRC.

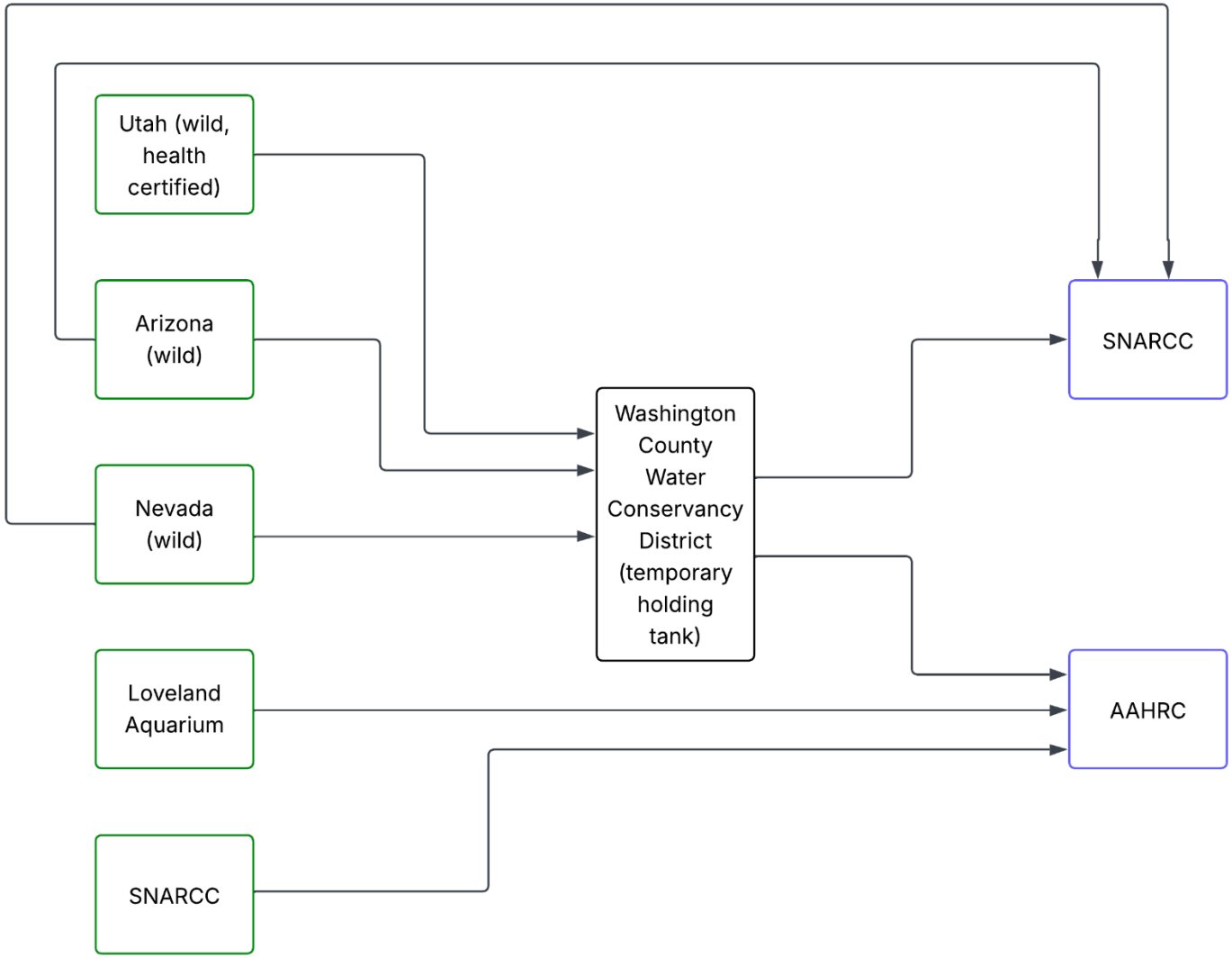
The first UDWR priority is the transfer of Woundfin this fall from SNARRC to AAHRC. The next priority, collection of Woundfin from the wild, should be viewed as opportunistic and would occur if a school of Woundfin (>10 fish) is encountered during sampling. If the number of Woundfin collected is between 10 and 29 fish, they will be sent to AAHRC. If >30 Woundfin are collected, some number (minimum 30) will be transferred to SNARRC and any remaining fish will be sent to AAHRC. The decision on how fish will be split among facilities will be made at a later time and will depend on factors such as the number collected and other logistics.

Fish may be collected from sources that are not health certified. Health certification from some sources is not possible due to: a) low numbers of wild fish available and b) numerous collection scenarios (Figure 1) requiring multiple health certifications.

It should be noted that some scenarios involve holding fish in a temporary holding facility at the Washington County Water Conservancy District. This facility is used to hold fish until transport to the final destination can be arranged. The water supply to this holding facility is dechlorinated culinary water. The holding facility is operated as an isolation facility and field personnel and equipment do not have access to the facility. In addition, Asian Tapeworm(*Schyzocotyle acheilognathi*) treatments arerequired for Woundfin collected from the wild and those treatments will be performed at this facility.

The isolation facility at the Washington County Water Conservancy District may not be used for all collection scenarios. In particular, fish fromSNARRCmay be sent directly to AAHRC. Also, Woundfin collected in Arizona or Nevada may go directly to SNARRC. Again, the final decision on how fish are moved will be determined at a later time based on the number of fish collected andother logistics.

Table 1. Flowchart showing the possible movement scenarios under this variance request.



Variance Proposal
Utah Fish Health Policy Board

Requestor Name & Company: Loveland Living Planet Aquarium Date: Sept 24, 2025

Address, Phone, Email, Fax: 12033 S. Lone Peak Parkway, Draper, UT, 84020. (801)355-3474. Registrar@livingplanet

Description of variance proposal (short description of specifics for the proposal)

Beginning date: date of approval Ending date: ongoing

Species, size, & numbers:

Current variance is not limited to a specific list of species. We would like to request that this continue with the renewal.

Source (include UTM or HUC):

Destination (include UTM or HUC):

Description of proposed activity:

LLPA would like to continue the variance to transfer non-health approved wild fish and other aquatic animals that are not available from Health Approved Commercial sources to LLPA for display.

Disposal and decontamination (fish disposal and facility decontamination methods):

All discharged water goes to a sanitary sewer, and equipment is disinfected with 500ppm sodium hypochlorite or 200ppm quaternary ammonium. Animals are quarantined, receiving diagnostic testing and treatments. Animals are not released to the wild. Mortalities are frozen then incinerated.

Reason (why this varies from R58-17. You may wish to contact UDAF (801 538 7029) if assistance with R58-17 is needed):

LLPA is a non-profit education facility, a public aquarium, and an Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited institution. To fulfill its mission statement to "inspire people to explore, discover, and learn about Earth's diverse ecosystems", LLPA must work with other AZA facilities, commercial suppliers, and wildlife agencies to acquire or collect aquatic animals for display, many of which are not Approved Health Sources. Approval of this variance provides the ability to acquire species and sizes that are not available at Approved Health Sources.
LLPA only works with non-AZA vendors that have participated in our review process, consisting of an application to describe their husbandry and health programs, animal acquisition process, review of permits/licenses, and performing reference checks to ensure the vendor operates in an ethical and sustainable manner before they are approved to work with LLPA. Vendors must be reviewed every 5 years.

Scientific rationale (scientific reasons upon which the variance is based):

To allow LLPA to provide educational displays of non-native species in support of the mission statement.

Inspection history (inspection history for the source, destination, and species or enter "none" if not applicable):

None

Benefit (how the variance would benefit you, the Utah aquaculture industry, the public, and/or public fishery resources):

The display of a variety of aquatic species and ecosystems to the general public and schools in Utah informs them about the value of aquatic ecosystems in Utah and around the world. These displays also allow for opportunities for signage, as well as direct interactions with staff Educators to provide more educational opportunities about these animals and their environments.

Risk (potential harm the variance may cause to the Utah aquaculture industry or public fishery resources, etc.):

This renewal should pose no risk to Utah Aquaculture or wildlife. All live aquatic animals acquired are placed into quarantine, where they receive diagnostic testing and treatments, and animals are not released to the wild. All discharged water goes to a sanitary sewer.

Funding (sources of funding that will be used, i.e., own financing, research, private, state, etc.):

N/A

Names (contact information for companies or persons who have agreed to work with you or speak in favor of the variance):

Name: _____ Company: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Name: _____ Company: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Stipulations required by the Board:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
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10. _____

Regulatory authority/contact: UDAF ☐ UDWR ☐

Comment:

Approval: Yes ○ No ○ Letter ○

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