

BOATING ADVISORY COUNCIL

DIVISION OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Final - Minutes Of The Meeting Held on **October 21st, 2025, at 4:00PM**
Hybrid

Topic: Boating Advisory Council Introductory Meeting

Date: October 21st, 2025 - **Time:** 4:00-6:00 PM - **Location:** Virtual/Soldier Hollow

Meeting Point:

Google Meet joining info

Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/beb-xqdo-ppp> Or dial: (US) +1 405-357-8369 PIN: 379 595 259 #

More phone numbers: <https://tel.meet/beb-xqdo-ppp?pin=9686867164865>

Meeting Attendees: Jeff Salt (Chair), Jason Taylor (Co-Chair), Adam Eakle, DeWitt Smith, Jenny Knudsen, George Sommer, John Laursen, Tim Herzog

Department Staff: Jason Curry, Patrick Morrison, Ty Hunter, Brian Kurta, Nicole Hanna, Jorge Vazquez

Agenda - Meeting Minutes

- 1. Information (4:00PM) - Welcome**
 - a. Introduction of the Attendees**
 - i. Members - Respective Positions**
 - ii. Department Staff**
 - iii. Members of the Public**

(00:00) - Chair Jeff Salt opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees, both in-person and virtual, to the Boating Advisory Council meeting. A roll-call style introduction followed,

beginning with committee members, invited guests, and then moving to online participants.

Jason Taylor served as Acting Chair on behalf of Jeff Salt, Chairman of the Boating Advisory Council.

Council Members:

- **Jeff Salt** – Chair, Paddling Sports Representative
- **George Sommer** – Boating Advisory Council Member
- **DeWitt Smith** – Sailing Representative
- **Jason Taylor** – Outfitters Representative
- **John Laursen** – At-Large Representative
- **Tim Herzog** – Boat Shack, Boat Dealer Representative
- **Jenny Knudsen** – Water Sports Representative
- **Adam Eakle** – Motorboat Representative

Division Staff:

- **Brian Kurta** – Assistant Boating Law Administrator, Division of Law Enforcement
- **Ty Hunter** – Boating Program Manager, Division of Outdoor Recreation
- **Jorge Vazquez** – Recreation Grant Analyst, Division of Outdoor Recreation
- **Patrick Morrison** – Recreation Program Director, Division of Recreation
- **Nicole Hanna** – Counsel for the Division of Outdoor Recreation

Members of the Public:

- Kent Singleton
- Jeff Glum
- John Shultz
- Ron Dun
- Bill Quap
- Michelle Christian - Utah Drowning Coalition

Following introductions, staff explained the process for online public participation, including the hand-raise and contributor-designation system for those wishing to comment.

2. **Action (4:10PM) - Approval of meeting minutes**

(05:07) - Chair Salt allowed for the council to read over the minutes. The Council reviewed the minutes from the May 6, 2025 meeting. Chair Salt provided time for members to review and confirm any needed corrections.

After resolving an online audio issue, John Laursen confirmed he had no corrections to offer. No other members proposed changes.

Chair Salt called for a motion.

GEORGE SOMMER MADE THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS DRAFTED. JOHN LAURSEN SECONDED. THE MOTION PASSED WITH ALL MEMBERS VOTING IN FAVOR, WITH ONE ABSTENTION FROM A MEMBER WHO WAS NOT PRESENT AT THE PREVIOUS MEETING.

3. **Information (4:15PM) - Public Comments**

During this time members of the public will be given 3 minutes to inform the Council about boating issues or topics not listed on the meeting agenda. No actions can be taken by the Council. Rules of decorum and respect will be adhered to.

During this time, members of the public were given three minutes to comment on boating issues not listed on the meeting agenda. Chair Salt explained how the public comment period works and opened the floor for comments. No actions could be taken.

(00:08:38) - Kent Singleton, property owner in Morgan County, began public comment and provided extensive remarks regarding:

- Unauthorized public and outfitter use of his private property.
- Denial of county permits to install no-trespassing signage.
- Misapplication of FEMA floodplain requirements.
- Lack of response to his GRAMA request for official navigable waterway lists.
- Concerns that agencies rely on unclear or unpublished navigability determination.
- A request that all public boating access decisions be based on legally verified navigability findings.

- Formal request to make this discussion as a topic as an agenda item for the next meeting.

Mr. Singleton submitted written materials and requested a future agenda item.

Chair Salt thanked him and reiterated that the Council may consider future agenda items but cannot take action during public comment.

Jeff Glum, a member of the public, expressed concern that citizen input may not be adequately addressed, emphasizing the importance of public perspectives in state recreation policy.

Chair Salt clarified that the Council serves solely in an advisory capacity to the Division and has no authority to make policy decisions. He noted that the Council may take public comment and may request future agenda items.

Chair Salt asked if there was any additional public comment. Seeing none he clarified to the public that the council hears the concerns of the public and ensured them that they are not ignored.

No other public comments were submitted in-person or online.

4. Information (4:20PM) Letter from Blake Millet

(00:15:11) – Chair Salt introduced a letter received from Blake Mallette, Chair of Utah Muskies Inc., and explained that he wished to share it with the Council so they could discuss the issues presented and determine recommendations to the Division on how to handle the conflict. The letter raised concerns about access conflicts at Newton Reservoir and Pineview Reservoir, particularly during low-water conditions.

Council Discussion Highlights:

- When Newton Reservoir is below full pool, proximity rules make it unsafe or impossible for water skiing.
- Members noted increasing conflicts between anglers and skiers on narrow or constrained reservoirs.
- Chair Salt emphasized the legitimate need for advisory input on conflicts among user groups.
- Mr. Sommer asked what actions the Council should take in response to the letter. He noted that Newton Reservoir is not, to his knowledge, a publicly owned body of

water, and that several issues raised in the letter may fall under the responsibility of the Town of Newton or the County. He stated that any remaining concerns would likely involve enforcement when the reservoir drops below full pool.

- Mr. Hunter explained existing elevation-based zoning for Newton Reservoir, which becomes wakeless at specific water levels. And explained who owns the body of water such as the Bureau of Reclamation.
- Chair Salt mentioned that such conflicts may also arise at other reservoirs, though typically with less severity due to larger surface areas.
- Council discussed the similarities at the other bodies of water and some solutions that could be provided.

The Council discussed potential recommendations to the Division, including:

- Engagement with law enforcement on patrol priorities.

Mr. Kurta provided additional input regarding proximity and competing-use conflicts. He emphasized that enforcement capacity is limited on all water bodies but noted that the creation of the Division of Law Enforcement—combining officers from Outdoor Recreation, Wildlife, Forestry, Fire, and State Parks—allows for broader coverage.

- Collaboration with counties, the Bureau of Reclamation, and local municipalities.
- Enhanced user education.
- Further exploration of conflict-mitigation strategies.

No motions were made. Chair Salt summarized that this discussion represented the beginning of a longer-term effort to understand and advise on reservoir-use conflicts.

5. *Information (4:30 PM) – Presentation: New Proposed Fee on Inflatable and Motorized Boats Less Than 10 Feet - Ty Hunter*
a. *This Item will be open for Public Comment*

Chair Salt then moved to the next agenda item, New Proposed Fee on Inflatable and Motorized Boats Less Than 10 Feet, by Ty Hunter and noted that public comment would be available for that item as well.

Chair Salt, with assistance from State Attorney Nicole Hanna, provided clarification on how this action-item portion of the meeting would proceed, including the process for public

comment and how input would be incorporated before any recommendations were considered.

(00:33:13) – Mr. Hunter presented a proposal for a new \$5 statewide registration fee for inflatable motorized vessels less than 10 feet in length, effective January 1, 2027.

Key points included:

- Registration fees are authorized under Title 73, Chapter 18, Section 7(2) of the Utah Code, and in accordance with §63J-1-504.
- Current statewide boating fees are:
 - – \$20 for vessels less than 16 feet in length (generally non-titled craft).
 - – \$40 for vessels 16 feet and greater in length, including personal watercraft (generally titled craft).
- A legislative constituent requested a free or reduced registration fee for small inflatable vessels, noting that over several years the required fees exceeded the vessel's purchase price.
- After meetings and discussion, an agreement was reached to propose a new fee specifically for motorized inflatable vessels less than 10 feet in length.
- The proposed fee allows these vessels to continue being counted for both state and federal funding formulas based on total annual vessel registrations.
- The Division expects an approximate \$15 per-vessel revenue loss under the new fee structure.
- The Division recommends adding the following to the fee schedule for the 2026 legislative session:
 - – Statewide boat registration fee: inflatable motorized vessels less than 10 feet in length — \$5, effective January 1, 2027.
- Mr. Hunter clarified that this is a new fee, in addition to the existing \$20 fee category.

Council Discussion:

(00:38:04) - Members clarified that this represents a reduction, not an additional fee.

Mr. Hunter clarified that the proposed \$5 fee applies only to the state registration fee. Vessel owners currently pay three separate charges:

- State registration fee
- County uniform fee (fee-in-lieu of property tax)

- AIS decal fee

He explained that counties do collect uniform fees on vessels under 16 feet, and that process will continue.

Beginning January 1, 2026, the county uniform fee will be split 50/50:

- Half will remain with the county
- Half will be directed to the Utah Boating Grant Program, administered by the Division of Outdoor Recreation

The total uniform fee amount will remain the same; only the distribution changes.

Council members asked how the county uniform fee is calculated. Mr. Hunter noted that the breakdown is available on the Utah DMV website under "Uniform Age-Based Fees," and confirmed that currently counties receive the full amount until the 2026 change takes effect.

Staff further clarified that projects eligible for the new Utah Boating Grant include: Restrooms and boating amenities

- Parking lots serving boating access
- Boat ramps and docks
- Shoreline erosion mitigation
- Motorized and non-motorized access points
- Search and rescue-related improvements
- Projects submitted by cities, counties, water conservancy districts, and state agencies

A council member asked whether vessel owners pay the county fee in every county where they recreate. Mr. Hunter clarified that the fee is paid only to the county of residence, not to each county where a vessel is used.

A question was then raised about the financial impact of reducing the fee from \$20 to \$5 for small inflatable motorized vessels.

Mr. Hunter explained that:

The Division will incur an estimated \$15 loss per vessel, but eliminating the registration requirement entirely would result in greater losses, because unregistered vessels are not counted toward federal funding formulas.

Federal allocations based on registered vessel counts include:

- Federal Recreational Boating Excise Tax funds
- Federal motor-fuel tax reimbursements for boating use
- State motor-fuel reimbursements used for boating access

Maintaining registration — even at a reduced rate — ensures Utah continues receiving these funds.

Council members confirmed that the number of inflatable motorized vessels under 10 ft. is relatively small and would not materially impact program revenue.

Mr. Eakle expressed support, noting the reduced fee creates proportionality between vessel value and registration cost while still preserving federal match eligibility.

Public Comment:

- Ed Askew, who initiated the legislative inquiry, explaining the cost disproportion for small craft and his personal interaction and how these fees impacted him. He also explained his conversation with Mr. Hunter and an agreement that they came too.
- Jeff Glum, supported it but had clarifying questions on if the county can update the fee that the state charges. Mr. Hunter explained that it would be something that would have to go through the legislative process to change/update.
- Bill Quapp, with Trout Unlimited, supported the proposal and recommended future AIS fee differentiation, as it would make things equitable. He expressed appreciate for Mr. Hunter and the division.
- John Schultz, Vice-Chairman with Utah Anglers Coalition, supported fee reduction and highlighted affordability concerns for families and also expressed appreciation for Mr. Hunter
- Ron Dun, with Strawberry Anglers Association, supported the proposal, especially given Salt Lake County's higher county fees.

No commenters opposed the proposal. And there were no other comments from the public, bringing a closure to the public hearing portion.

6. Action (4:45PM) – Boating Advisory Council Votes on New Proposed Fee

(00:38:04) - Chair Salt called for a motion.

GEORGE SOMMER MOVED TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED \$5 REGISTRATION FEE FOR INFLATABLE MOTORIZED VESSELS LESS THAN 10 FEET.

JASON TAYLOR SECONDED. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

7. *Information* (5:00 PM) – Presentation: Proposed Boat Dealer Fee Increase – Ty Hunter

a. This Item will be open for Public Comment

Chair Salt moved to the next agenda item, the proposed boat dealer fee increase, and passed the discussion to Ty Hunter.

(01:03:43) - Mr. Hunter presented a proposal to increase the boat dealer number and registration fee from \$25 to \$30, effective July 1, 2026.

Key points included:

- The dealer fee has not been updated since 2014.
- Regular registration fees for private boaters have increased during that period, but dealer fees have not.
- Dealer numbers allow for testing, demonstration, and transport of multiple vessels.

Council Discussion:

- Members agreed the increase was reasonable and consistent with the cost of services.
- A brief discussion addressed AIS-related enforcement, which is outside the Division of Outdoor Recreation's authority.

Public Comment:

- No public comments were submitted online or in person.

8. *Action* (5:15PM) – Boating Advisory Council Votes on Boat Dealer Increase

(01:09:26) – Chair Salt, asked for any additional comments from the council and if not called for a motion.

**JOHN LAURSEN MOVED TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED
INCREASE TO \$30 FOR BOAT DEALER REGISTRATION
NUMBERS, EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2026.
GEORGE SOMMER SECONDED.**

Roll Call vote was taken and went in the following order:

- George - Aye
- Jeff - Aye
- Tim - Aye
- Adam - Aye
- John - Aye
- Jason - Aye
- Jenny - Aye
- DeWitt - Aye

A full roll-call vote was taken, with all members voting Aye and none opposed or abstaining.

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**9. Information/Discussion Item (5:30 PM) – Administrative Rules: R650-215-5 & 6
(Life Jackets) – Ty Hunter**
a. *This Item will be open for Public Comment*

Chair Salt moved to the next item on the agenda and allowed Mr. Hunter to provide information on the proposed administrative rule change.

(01:12:01) – Mr. Hunter explained that a legislator submitted a request asking the Division to review and consider updates to Utah's river-based life jacket administrative rules. Current rules require mandatory wear on rivers outside designated flatwater zones.

Summary of Legislator's Rule Update Request:

- The legislator suggested reducing existing mandatory wear requirements, asserting that current rules may be overly restrictive.
- The legislator proposed limiting mandatory wear to sheriff-designated hazardous sections.

- Implementing such a system would require extensive county-by-county revisions to Administrative Rules R650-215-5 and R650-215-6 and may create enforcement complications.

Mr. Hunter explained that the current rule designates flatwater zones as exempt from mandatory life jacket wear, while all other river sections require wear. Reversing this structure would require defining specific river segments statewide. A reversal would require identifying precise geographic boundaries for both wear and non-wear sections.

He added that the request also included potential child exemptions, which would further complicate the rule. He stated that the Division could rewrite the rule for all 29 counties, consider alternative zoning methods, or make no changes.

Mr. Hunter emphasized that Utah's river injury and fatality rates are consistently low, especially compared to Colorado, which experiences far higher numbers. He stated that the existing rule works well and is not broken, and he requested the Council's advisement on how to proceed.

Council Discussion Highlights:

- Council asked Mr. Hunter if the system was broken and he responded with no.
- Council members expressed concern about fixing something that isn't broken.
 - Utah's river fatality rate is low; current rules function effectively.
- Frequent paddleboard-related fatalities underscore the importance of wear requirements and expressed it as common sense to wear life jackets.
- Many members strongly opposed relaxing standards, citing drowning statistics, insurance requirements, and unpredictability of water conditions.
- Several members expressed concerns about increased confusion and enforcement burden if rules were reversed or complexly zoned.

Public Comment:

Multiple in-person and online commenters, including the Utah Drowning Prevention Coalition, the Utah Recreation and Parks Association, and individual boaters, overwhelmingly supported maintaining current life jacket rules.

Bill Quapp – Stillwater users / Fly fishing community

- Supported current rules generally but expressed concern that mandatory wear for adults in some flatwater areas may feel intrusive.

- Noted that experienced adults can safely navigate certain flatwater sections with limited risk to others.
- Stated that youth should always wear life jackets and described past incidents where adults rescued minors on the Green River.
- Encouraged discretion in enforcement but concluded with: "If it isn't broken, don't fix it."

Michelle Christensen – Utah Drowning Prevention Coalition / Utah Recreation & Parks Association Aquatic Professionals

- Strongly supported keeping Utah's mandatory life jacket rules.
- Said rules are clear, targeted to high-risk situations, and easy for the public to understand and apply.
- Cited national data: 75% of boating deaths are drownings; 87% of drowning victims were not wearing life jackets.
- Reported more than 120 EMS responses to Utah water incidents in 2024–2025, with 9 of 10 drowning victims not wearing life jackets.
- Emphasized that life jackets provide critical flotation and visibility in capsizes, falls overboard, and cold-water conditions.
- Highlighted increased paddlecraft and PWC use by newer boaters.
- Stressed that consistent wear requirements reduce confusion, aid enforcement, and align with national best practices.
- Noted the community and economic cost of drownings and urged maintaining the current rules.

Trish Hull – Utah Drowning Prevention Coalition (Chair)

- Opposed changes and stated the current rules "are not broken."
- Noted people often underestimate water conditions and overestimate their abilities, even on flatwater.
- Cited changing conditions, storms, and unexpected hazards (e.g., debris, fires aboard vessels).
- Discussed long-term impacts on survivors and emotional effects on first responders.
- Stated drowning is preventable and life jackets are the most effective intervention.
- Recalled incidents on the Weber River and that males have higher drowning rates.
- Emphasized that modern life jackets are comfortable and practical.

Nicole Hannah – Citizen / Attorney

- Supported keeping existing rules.
- Said early life-jacket habits in children create lifelong safety behavior.
- Noted modern life jackets are highly comfortable and not restrictive.
- Shared examples of shallow-water drownings and hazards such as submerged branches.
- Warned that weakening rules could increase liability for the state and Good Samaritans assisting in rescues.

Ed Askew – Member of the public

- Expressed concern that current rules do not adequately address paddleboards.
- Described an incident where a paddle boarder fell, and her life jacket was out of reach; assisted her in rescue.
- Argued that paddleboarders should be required to wear life jackets because boards can drift away quickly.
- Mentioned personal experiences with near-miss incidents and noted multiple recent drownings on flatwater lakes.
- Supported stronger rules for paddle craft and stated something “needs to be done”.

Council Summary:

Chair Salt and the Council expressed strong consensus that the current rules are effective and should remain unchanged. No action was taken, but robust feedback was provided for staff consideration.

10. Information (5:40PM) – Update Clean Vessel Act/Boating Access – Jorge Vazquez

Chair Salt moved to the next agenda item and gave the floor to Jorge Vazquez.

(01:40:47) – Mr. Vazquez provided updates:

- Clean Vessel Act (CVA) opened on the state side beginning on October 1st.
- CVA and Boating Access (BA) grant applications close October 31.
- Federal NOFO release is delayed due to federal government closure; timelines will shift accordingly.
- Staff plan to prepare applications in advance to meet abbreviated federal windows.
- Council discussed improvements to the scoring process, including:
 - A prescoring meeting for orientation

- Aligning scoring criteria with application content
- Allowing more time for council review

The Council also discussed how prescoring meetings are conducted, including whether they must be posted on the Public Notice Website.

Patrick Morrison described how these meetings are typically run. He explained that prescoring meetings are always posted as public meetings because some program business is inevitably discussed. He clarified that their intent is strictly preparatory and not decision-making. The meetings are used to review scoring metrics, outline the evaluation process, highlight trends in applications, and answer questions, ensuring that expectations are clear ahead of the formal scoring meeting. He noted that this process has been effective in preparing both staff and council members for productive scoring sessions.

Members expressed support for improved preparation and clarity in the upcoming grant cycle.

11. Action (4:50 PM) – Next Meeting/Other Business

(01:55:45) – The Council discussed timing needs for pre-scoring and scoring sessions for CVA and Boating Access grants.

A consensus was reached for two meetings:

1. Prescoring Meeting

- **December 2, 2025, at 4:00 PM**
- Virtual meeting format anticipated
- Purpose: application overview and scoring procedure orientation

2. Grant Scoring Meeting

- **January 6, 2026, at 4:00 PM**
- Formal scoring and prioritization of grant applications

All members confirmed availability. No objections were raised.

12. Adjourn – Close (6:00PM)

(02:05:58) – With no further business, Chair Salt called for a motion to adjourn.

**JOHN LAURSEN MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.
JENNY KNUDSEN SECONDED.
THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**