

**RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT  
COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING**  
Public Lands Policy Coordination Office

**November 6, 2025**

**MINUTES**

**Attendees:**

**Members:**

Chris Merritt, SHPO, *Chair*  
Jan Morse, OGM  
Jodi Gardberg DWQ  
Conner Peterson, UDAF  
Daniel Olson, DWR  
Sarah Ward, DEQ  
Sheila Vance, DAQ  
Steve Bowman, UGS  
Kate Novak, FFSL  
Janna Wilkinson, DEM  
David Allison, DERR  
Reed Soper, SITLA  
Brian Speer, DWMRC  
Devan Chavez, State Parks

**Invited Federal Agencies:**

**Guests**

Becky Keeney, GOED, GOEO  
Kim Wells, DNR  
Camille Johnson, GOV Tourism  
Alena Franco, SHPO  
Ian Wright, SHPO  
Allan Wolfrum, FFSL  
Laura Ault, DGO, DTS, AGRC  
Tracy Harrison, DEM  
Mark Boshell, PLPCO

**Staff:**

Sindy Smith, PLPCO

## Welcome and Introductions

Chris Merritt, *Chair*, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. After introductions, Chris welcomed everyone.

## Approval of Minutes

Representatives unanimously approved the draft minutes of the August 7, 2025, meeting.

## Responsible Tourism

Becky Keeney, Director of Strategy for the Utah Office of Tourism, presented "Utah Forever," a major new initiative funded by an Economic Development Administration grant. The campaign is designed to unify responsible visitation messaging across all state partners, from land managers to local communities. This strategic, collaborative approach aims to better manage tourism's impact on natural and cultural resources, enhance public safety, and ensure a high-quality visitor experience.

The initiative is built on a transparent and inclusive framework designed for broad adoption by government agencies, industry partners, and the public.

- **Guiding Mission:** The core mission is to "preserve the natural beauty, vibrant culture, and unique traditions that make the state so special."
- **Core Concept - "Stewards":** The term "stewards" is intentionally used as an inclusive umbrella concept. It encompasses travelers, residents, and agency partners, promoting a shared responsibility for Utah's future.
- **Strategic Messaging Pillars:** The framework uses the "UTAH" mnemonic to make its core principles easy to remember and share:
  1. Unite for Utah
  2. Treat the state like it's yours
  3. Always adventure safe
  4. Honor local cultures

To support the rollout of the "Utah Forever" campaign, the Office of Tourism has developed several resources and outlined the next steps for partner engagement.

- **Partner Resources:** Three key documents are available on the industry-facing website, <https://travel.utah.gov/utah-forever/>:
  - **Ethos Guide:** Defines the campaign's core mission and brand identity.
  - **Framework Document:** Provides a comprehensive library of strategic objectives, audience analysis, a shared lexicon, and implementation best practices.
  - **Partner Toolkit:** Contains actionable, shareable assets for integrating campaign messaging.
- **Upcoming Engagement:** A partner webinar is scheduled for November 13th at noon to provide a detailed walkthrough of the resources and toolkits. An invitation will be shared with the committee.

- **Inter-Agency Coordination:** The Office of Tourism is actively seeking to coordinate with other government agencies to adapt and share these resources with their respective stakeholders.

Kim Wells, Director of Communications at DNR, expressed enthusiasm for leveraging the campaign across DNR programs, such as Every Kid Outdoors and the Junior Ranger program, and suggested a possible gubernatorial "Forever Utah Day" proclamation.

Jodi Gardberg, Environmental Program Manager I at DWQ, noted the direct alignment with DWQ's mission, stating, "Stewardship is at the heart of what we do... it'd be nice to adopt the language and incorporate it" into watershed protection and citizen science initiatives.

Becky addressed questions and comments.

## **RDCC Process and Training Opportunities**

Sindy Smith, the RDCC Coordinator, PLPCO, provided an overview of the committee's function and purpose. This briefing served as an orientation for new members and a refresher for existing members.

The presentation clarified the RDCC's unique and essential role within state government:

- To facilitate a single, coordinated response from the State of Utah on federal projects.
- The RDCC database is used to collect agency comments on a given project. These comments are merged, and any conflicts among agency positions are identified and resolved before a formal, unified state position is issued.

RDCC database training is available. To coordinate sessions, agencies can reach out as needed.

Sindy addressed questions and comments.

Chris issued a procedural reminder to all agencies: relying solely on the RDCC database for project comments does not fulfill the distinct statutory obligation to consult directly with the SHPO on cultural resources for state undertakings. He stressed that agencies must maintain separate, direct lines of communication with SHPO to ensure legal compliance on these matters.

## **Agency Reports**

- Christopher Merritt reported the following from the Utah State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO):
  - The ongoing shutdown poses a potential risk to federal funding streams, and SHPO has been asked to develop triage plans. The office also offered to help other agencies connect with federal archaeologists who may be periodically available to assist with project needs.
  - **Cultural Site Stewardship Program:** The volunteer stewardship program has provided immense value during the shutdown. **Ian Wright** reported 1,115 donated hours, over 25,000 miles driven, an estimated \$60,000 in volunteer value,

356 monitoring reports, and 28 damages reported. Financial support from the PLPCO was acknowledged as critical to this effort.

- ***Congressional Testimony:*** Chris Merritt testified before Congress regarding potential permitting reforms related to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
- Kate Novak reported the following from the Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands (FFSL):
  - FFSL has completed the Utah Lake Study and submitted the study to the legislature.
  - FFSL continues the work on several planning efforts, including the comprehensive management plans for Utah Lake and the Great Salt Lake.
  - FFSL has hired a new archaeologist, Allan Wolfrum.
- Jan Morse reported the following from the Division of Oil, Gas and Mining (OGM):
  - The OGM’s application to the EPA for primacy in regulating Class 6 (carbon sequestration) wells is open for public comment until December 5th. A public hearing is scheduled for December 8th.
  - A legislative-mandated study on modernizing surety forms for mineral mines has been completed. The report will be presented to the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee.
- Mark Stratford reported the following from the Division of Water Rights (DWRi):
  - DWRi is currently in the process of updating its certification with the Army Corps of Engineers for its stream alteration permit program.
  - A comprehensive water distribution management plan for the Great Salt Lake has been completed and is now available to the public on DWRi’s website:  
<https://waterrights.utah.gov/>
- Laura Alt reported the following from the Department of Government Operations, Division of Technology Services, Utah Geospatial Resource Center (DGO, DTS, AGRC):
  - The Utah GIS Advisory Council has been successfully reactivated, with strong attendance at its recent meeting and the formation of six active subcommittees.
  - An invitation to participate in the council or its subcommittees can be found at:  
<https://gis.utah.gov/collaboration/community/user-groups/gisac/>  
The form to sign up for updates:  
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe2GGvbOe2z18NQ-0o5BLL8rHOdQExFUUHbNSS1qwBOgh4vVA/viewform>

## **Other Business**

The next RDCC meeting will be held on February 5, 2026.

## **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:50 a.m.