

MINUTES
Uintah Conservation District
Regular Meeting, January 12, 2026
Location: Western Park Board Room
302 East 200 South, Vernal, Utah

ATTENDANCE:

Conservation District (CD) Supervisor

District Chair Bryan Bell

Todd Thacker, Vice Chair

Johnathan McKee, Supervisor

Steve Hanberg, Supervisor

Conservation District Supervisors, Absent:

Jim Slaugh, Treasurer

Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF):

Darrell Gillman, Resource Coordinator

Duane Houston, Planner

Terrell Thayne, GIP Coordinator

Conservation District Staff

Andrea Merrell, Clerk

NRCS:

Jeremy Maycock, DC

Cortney Borer, Sage Grouse Coordinator

Jim Spencer, Wildlife Biologist

USU Extension:

Others:

Taylor Deppen, Forestry Coord, UT DNR

Forestry and NRCS partner planner

Nathan Hall, Engineer, UT DEQ

CD MEETING – CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bryan Bell, called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MEETING MINUTES*

Andrea Merrell passed out copies of the meeting agenda and minutes for the December 8 Uintah Conservation District (UCD) Board Meeting. The Supervisors reviewed and discussed the minutes.

Action Item: Todd Thacker made a motion to approve the January 12 meeting agenda and the December 8 meeting minutes as presented. Steve Hanberg seconded the motion. The voting was unanimous, and the motion passed.

LOCAL WORKGROUP MEETING*

Jeremy Maycock, District Conservationist, discussed locally led conservation. He explained the role of the Conservation District in locally led conservation is to provide local input to the federal government. That is the purpose of this meeting. Additional state and federal agencies' representatives are at this meeting to also provide input. During this meeting the group needs to identify resource problems not being addressed.

Jeremy reviewed the 2025 accomplishments of his team for the agricultural producers of Uintah, Duchesne, and Daggett counties. For 2026 they have funding for contracts under the EQIP Salinity

program, the Sage Grouse Initiative program (SGI), the Conservation Stewardship program (CSP), and Regenerative Agriculture (RA) program.

He explained the Soil Health Program is renamed Regenerative Agriculture and these contracts will be five year contracts. Part of the planning process requires an assessment of the entire farm as well as soil testing in beginning (before condition) and at the end (after condition). There is a list of core practices for this program and the applicant is required to do at least one core practice. Application for 2026 funding ends Thursday, January 15.

He reported that Utah is in transition on strategic fund pools which means that for FY'2026 in the Uintah Basin, there isn't a targeted fund pool for pasture improvements or rangeland improvements. Applicants can work with NRCS planners to see if their planned rangeland improvements could be funded through the SGI program, and pasture improvements could be funded under Regenerative Agriculture program. He stated that in the Uintah Basin there may be resource concerns that fall outside of the present funding programs and as a group it is important to identify these resource concerns, prioritize them, and come up with solutions to address them.

Jeremy turned the meeting over to Jim Spencer to explain the process for identifying resource concerns. Following are the Resource Concerns identified by the group.

Resource Concerns:

Soil Health+

Riparian Restoration

- Russian olive removal
- Planting

Invasive weed control+

Diversion structures

Pasture replanting (improvement)+

Wildlife control: Deer and elk damage in agricultural areas.

Range – Water Distribution, fencing, weed control, prescribed grazing+

Pipeline Distribution System Projects

- have outlived life span
- not all project phases completed

Irrigation storage

Virtual fencing

No-till, Strip Till+

Wildfire prevention

- Fuel overload
- Tree loss from insect damage

+NOTE: These Resource Concerns can be addressed under the Regenerative Agriculture program.

Taylor Deppen asked if a resource concern needs to be added to the list for wildfire prevention in the valley areas. Darrell said there is a potential problem with fuel overload along stream corridors. Taylor discussed methods to reduce fuel overload: pest control, crown thinning, removal of vegetation in mosaics, and so forth.

To wrap up the Local Workgroup portion of the meeting, Jim suggested Supervisors discuss resource problems with agricultural producers as they circulate in their communities. This would help them determine if there are additional needs not identified.

CALENDAR YEAR 2026 CLERK CONTRACT*

Andrea Merrell passed a preliminary UCD Clerk Contract for calendar year 2026. She reviewed key points as per questions from the Supervisors.

Action Item: Steve made a motion to approve the Clerk Contract for 2026 as presented. Todd seconded the motion. The voting was unanimous, and the motion passed.

DISTRICT INSURANCE*

To provide background for this item of business, Andrea Merrell, reminded the Supervisors that during the October Board meeting Darrell told the Supervisors the State Legislature is requiring Conservation Districts to carry crime/liability insurance. The amount for insurance policies is based on the amount of money in the budget. Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) is looking into the possibility of setting up an insurance pool for all the Districts. Duchesne Conservation District has an insurance policy on their drill through the Utah Local Governments' Insurance Pool. The decision in October was to wait until the UCD treasurer bond needed to be renewed. Andrea reported she received notice that bond needs to be renewed by February 15.

Darrell Gillman said the State is still working on a way to cover all the Districts, and suggested that the District not renew the treasurer bond at this point.

He said another insurance the Supervisors can consider is insurance for the District equipment. Currently, the Vernal Hay Company covers the Esch no-till drill with their insurance, but the drill is owned by the District. So we may want to think of separate insurance to protect the District. UDAF is also looking at a group insurance policy for Districts with equipment like the no-till drills.

FINANCIAL REPORT

A. Balance Sheet, Profit and Loss Statement. Andrea Merrell gave each Supervisor a copy of the MACU Statement for December as well as a Balance Sheet, and a Profit & Loss Statement—both dated 1/8/2026.

She reported the amount of interest earned and ending balance for the savings account. For the checking account she related the check numbers, payee, amount, and purpose for the five checks cleared. There were no deposits made in December. She also reviewed the financial data on the Balance Sheet, and the Profit & Loss statement. She informed them that all expenses are within budgeted amounts and no adjustments are needed.

B. Bills for Payment. Andrea presented an invoice for reimbursement from Utah Association of Conservation Districts (UACD) for payroll services and an invoice from Uintah Water Conservancy District (UWCD) for assistance with the expenses of the Uintah Basin Water Summit. Discussion followed on the value of the Uintah Basin Water Summit.

Action Item: Todd Thacker made a motion to approve payment of the invoice to UWCD to help defray the expenses of the 2026 Uintah Basin Water Summit. Steve Hanberg seconded the motion. Voting was unanimous and the motion passed.

Action Item: Steve Hanberg made a motion to accept the financial report and authorize payment to UACD for payroll services as presented. Johnathan McKee seconded the motion. Voting unanimously passed the motion.

SERA*

Andrea and Darrell reviewed upcoming workshops. At the December 8 Board Meeting the Supervisors approved SERA expenses as follows: Uintah Basin Water Summit January 8, Northeastern Utah Beef Expo January 10, Soil Health in the West Conference February 10 to 12. The next Board Meeting will be held before the Crop School on February 24.

Andrea and Darrell told the Supervisors there will be a virtual workshop by UDAF personnel on January 13, 9:30 AM to 10:30 AM, or January 22 6 PM to 7 PM. The Supervisors are invited to participate, but it is not mandatory.

ARDL PROPOSAL*

Darrell presented an ARDL request for a project in the Jensen, Utah area. The producer has a Water Optimization grant and plans to replace wheel lines and a pivot. For another center pivot he plans to install more efficient nozzles. Funding is secured and the producer is putting improvements in this spring before irrigation season starts.

Todd Thacker made a motion to approve forwarding of the ARDL request to loan officers for processing. Johnathan McKee seconded the motion. Voting was unanimous and the motion passed.

OTHER BUSINESS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

There is no additional business for today's meeting.

**Motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:30 PM by Steve Hanberg and seconded by Todd Thacker.
Voting was unanimous and the motion passed.**