

**UGS BOARD MEETING**  
**Department of Natural Resources**  
**Utah Geological Survey, Utah Core Research Center**  
**240 N. Redwood Road, Salt Lake City**  
**Wednesday, January 21<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

The meeting of the UGS Board was called to order at 8:31 am

**ATTENDANCE**

**Board members:** Elissa Richards – Chair, Ken Fleck – Vice Chair, Becky Hammond, Neil Burk, Riley Brinkerhoff, Michael Hansen, Rich Borden, and Andy Bedingfield (SITLA).

**UGS Staff:**, Darlene Batatian, Stefan Kirby, Ben Dlin, Crystal Garza, and Cheryl Wing.

**ACTION ITEMS**

**Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting**

Riley Brinkerhoff motioned to approve the minutes from the August 20, 2025 UGS Board meeting. Rich Borden seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously, and the motion carried.

**Formal Approval of Contract Proposals**

Although contract proposals for external funding are provisionally approved by the Board by email, approval of contracts valued at greater than \$50,000 require formal approval at the next Board meeting. The proposals are:

*Great Salt Lake Playa Groundwater Inflow*; funding from the FFSL; new funding to the UGS \$194,012.79; total project funding \$229,976.79; estimated start date July 1, 2026; estimated end date July 1, 2028

*Evaluating the Role of Groundwater in Sustaining Great Salt Lake Wetlands Under Historical and Future Drought Conditions*; funding from FFSL; new funding to the UGS \$16,654; total project funding \$20,818 (UGS part only); estimated start date 7/1/26; estimated end date 6/30/28.

*Groundwater quality and septic-tank density study in the Bear Lake area*; funding from the Bear Lake Regional Commission, new funding to the UGS \$92,613.15; total project funding \$119,584.30; estimated start date January 1, 2026; estimated end date June 30, 2027.

*RAPID MIN: Accelerating and Transforming Alternate Rare Earth Ore Deposit Characterization*; funding from the DOE, new funding to the UGS \$150,000; total project funding ~\$6.5 million; estimated start date 7-1-2026; estimated end date 7-1-2029.

*SNOWMAP*; funding from NASA, new funding to the UGS \$610,327.18; total project funding \$954,476.30; estimated start date May 2026; estimated end date March 2029

*Quantifying water delivery to GSL wetlands through novel SAR remote sensing*; funding from the Office of the Great Salt Lake Commissioner, new funding to the UGS \$156,569.91; total project funding \$195,712.39; estimated start date April 1, 2026; estimated end date July 31, 2028.

Ken Fleck motioned to formally approve the proposals, Becky Hammond seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously, and the motion carried.

## **Director's Report – January 2026**

### **New hires:**

Crystal Garza – Financial Analyst III, replaced Winnie Pan  
Mark Radwin – Geologist, Groundwater/Wetlands  
Kitri Spencer – Geological Technician, Bookstore

### **Service Awards:**

Eugene Szymanski – 5 years  
Kathryn Ladig – 5 years  
Emily Kleber – 10 years  
Ben Erickson – 15 years

### **Promotions/Reclassifications/New positions:**

Emily Jainarain      Geologist to Project Geologist  
Trevor Schlossnagle   Project Geologist to Senior Geologist  
Kathryn Ladig      Project Geologist to Senior Geologist  
Paul Inkenbrandt      Senior Geologist to Senior Scientist  
Eugene Szymanski      Senior Geologist to Senior Scientist

### **Recent Publication:**

*Hydrogeologic Study of Castle Valley, Grand County, Utah*, by Erin Brinkman, Greg Gavin, Trevor H. Schlossnagle, and Janae Wallace 56 p., 2 appendices, SS-176, <https://doi.org/10.34191/SS-176>

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Darlene commends UGS staff for their dedication, outstanding publications, creating funding and proposal opportunities, excellence and expertise, goodwill and camaraderie for each other.

UGS is kicking off the 2026 New Year reflecting on our success over the past year. One year ago almost to the day, UGS was faced with the “Federal Funding Freeze” and a great deal of uncertainty about our overall budget. Over this past year, we successfully navigated those federal funding uncertainties, as well as transitioning through the retirement of Director Keach and my appointment as UGS’ new Director. We welcomed new board members Richard Borden and Michael Hansen onto our Board. I led UGS into strategic planning, revisiting our statute and leading with our statutory priorities to guide us through a myriad of strategic decisions. These informed, decisive actions successfully averted our potential budget shortfall: We brought a +\$1M carryover into FY26, anticipate a +1M carryover into FY27, and +1M carryover at the end of FY27 into FY28. We closed out 2025 year by celebrating with a series of holiday events- Many thanks to those Board members who could attend!

We also wrapped up 2025 by recognizing many of our staff with promotions, adjusted salary increases, and incentives awards, as outlined below. I have added structure to the process for these: We met collaboratively as a leadership team to review benchmarks for promotion, especially the more senior roles, and discussed these collaboratively as a leadership team. Promotions, ASIs and incentive awards will now take place 2x/year (December and June), giving both management and staff more predictability in the process and consolidating budgetary

impacts. I also gave Program Managers an incentive award budget to use any time over a 6-month period, with flexibility to award ‘spot bonuses’ to recognize staffs’ performance.

We will take a pause from the intense pace of the past 9 months, and focus on 4 initiatives:

1. Budget Management: UGS is financially healthy, allowing us to focus on our science, our staff, our stakeholders, and new priorities. We will take a pause now to measure and monitor our budget management strategies:
  - Focusing on our statutory mission;
  - Go/No Go proposal kickoff meetings to ‘vet’ new proposals for their impact, match commitment (for both external grants and internal use of our general funds).
  - Follow our staffing plan, including anticipating grant completions to re-allocate staff, and being flexible when new opportunities do drive potential new hires. We have 3 open science positions and will likely fill these this spring.
  
2. UGS Community: Our Culture, Health and Our Environment.
  - We just held a ‘Speed Networking’ event to bring staff from different programs together in a fun, casual get-to-know-you environment. Staff really liked it and asked to repeat it.
  - Creating an exhibit to display the *Diabloceratops* skull in the DNR lobby
  - Improvements in our work areas (adding a water bottle filling station, possibly an break room refresh). After a deep ‘housekeeping’ (removal of old paper and surplus cabinetry), we will do some space planning- we have grown organically and our workspace could be better organized and planned. Also adding a PA/camera system to UCRC meeting room.
  
3. Strategic Plan: UGS will continue to develop our new mission-focused Strategic Plan, enlisting the assistance of the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget (GOPB) Strategic Advisors team to help us develop our Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Tactics.
  
4. Training: Developing and Coaching Staff. UGS has a relatively young demographic; many do not have prior project or personnel management training or experience. As we develop the next line of future leaders, we want to be intentional about building skills and will develop a training plan for the year.

**Upcoming Legislative Session:** This session, UGS has only one building block request: A \$750K permanent adjustment to our restricted account appropriation. We will use our time on the Hill to meet and greet our legislative representatives, and build our engagement and value to state leaders.

To this end, UGS tailored our January Survey Notes articles towards legislative concerns with articles that demonstrate the return on investment of UGS funding, as well as other state priorities, like defining potential new mineral deposit models, and invasive phragmites management.

**External engagement :**

- UGS will be represented by Mike Vanden Berg and Andrew Rupke at upcoming USGS Earth MRI meetings in Reston VA; Mike will also meet with new USGS Director Ned Mamula.
- We continue to foster relationships with policy aides to Senator Curtis and Lee.
- I plan to attend AASG's Spring Liaison visit in DC.
- In April, Stefan and I will attend the Intermountain West Coalition of geological surveys in Tucson AZ.
- We are considering sponsoring fellowships with local universities: We met with Randy Irmiss, U of U/NHMU, and could use our Board's assistance reaching out to BYU. (See Discussion Items)

**Board Discussion Items:**

- UGS/NHMU License Plates
- Fellowship opportunities with local universities.
- Pending NDA's that will be announced soon
- Board Field Trip was discussed and potentially planned to fly to Mexican Hat area in the Utah State plane. The field trip is planned to take place Late September to Mid-October.

Board adjourned 10:36

**UGS Board Meeting  
January 21, 2026  
Utah Geological Survey**



# Agenda

<b>8:30</b>	<b>Welcome and Introductory Comments</b>	Elissa Richards, Chair
<b>8:40</b>	<b>Action Items</b> Approval of minutes of UGS Board meeting, August 20, 2025 Formal approval of project proposals since last meeting	Board
<b>8:55</b>	<b>Director's Report</b> Introductions of New UGS Staff, Other Staff News, Recent Publications Budget Management, Strategic Planning, Legislative Session, External Engagement	Darlene Batatian
<b>9:45</b>	<b>Break</b>	
<b>10:00</b>	<b>Financial Update</b>	Ben Dlin
<b>10:15</b>	<b>Discussion Items</b> License Plate University Fellowship Opportunities Upcoming Announcements Board Field Trip	Darlene Batatian/Staff  - Ben Dlin - Stefan Kirby - Darlene Batatian - Stefan Kirby
<b>11:00</b>	<b>Closing Comments, Adjourn</b>	Elissa Richards



# Contract Proposals

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**WELCOME!!**



**Crystal Garza**  
**Financial Analyst**

**Kitri Spencer**  
**Project Geologist,**  
**Bookstore**



**Mark Radwin**  
**Geologist,**  
**Ground Water**



## Service Awards

Five Years:

Eugene Szymanski  
Kathryn Ladig

Ten Years:

Emily Kleber



FIFTEEN YEARS!

Ben Erickson



# Promotions

**Emily Jainarain**

**Project Geologist**

**Trevor Schlossnagle**

**Senior Geologist**

**Kathryn Ladig**

**Senior Geologist**

**Paul Inkenbrandt**

**Senior Scientist**

**Eugene Szymanski**

**Senior Scientist**

## Congratulations!



## New Publications

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**Thank you to our UGS staff  
for your dedication to our work together,  
outstanding publications,  
creating funding and proposal opportunities,  
your excellence and expertise,  
and your goodwill and camaraderie for each other!**



## Looking Back: One Year Ago

- “Federal Freeze” - Locked out of funding portals
- Great uncertainty about future federal funding
- Realized we were far off revenue goals
  - **-\$1M shortfall expected**
- Bill’s retirement imminent– Incoming new Director (?)
- Uncertainty – Required intense strategic positioning & sound management

*“We will do the good and necessary things, and  
We will do the difficult and necessary things.”*



# Budget Shortfall Drove UGS Strategic Planning

April 2025 – Darlene appointed as UGS Director

Immediately informed of significant anticipated budget deficits

**-\$750K end FY25**

**-\$1.5M end FY26**

No guidelines to prioritize resources (personnel) or our work

- **Opportunity to Realign, Refocus Organization**
- **Connect people back to their mission**



## Important Strategic Questions

- Why are we running a deficit - How are UGS funds being spent?
  - Review of staffing, programs, grant match, management
- Is this the work we should be doing (*How do we know*)?
- Are we meeting our statutory obligations?
- Are we communicating our work/data to the 'right' stakeholders?
- If changes need to be made, how do we decide what is a priority?
- How can we create stable, secure funding for UGS?



# Immediate Adjustments to Address Deficit

- **Perform on grants to collect revenue ~ Jan 2025** Recovered +\$300,000
    - Some grants running at a deficit, others not being executed
    - Asked staff to renew focus on performing & billing grant work Permanent culture change
    - UGS met revenue goals for the year!
  - **‘Strategic attrition’** (10% reduction from 94 to 85 people)
    - TLs >grad school, retirement/resignation, RIF 2 people Personnel cost savings \$900,000
    - Without impacting ability to execute work
  - **Implemented “Go-No Go” to vet new proposals** Avoidance \$630,000
- In 2025, UGS committed \$1.9M to grant match without considering...
- Is this opportunity reasonable, and in line with our statute (‘strategic imperatives’)?
  - Can we execute- Does this require new hiring? Do staff have bandwidth?
  - **Vetting new proposals as a team**



# Budget Successfully Managed!

- Instead of a **-\$1.5M** deficit at end FY25....  
    **Ended FY25 with \$1M+ carryover**
- Instead of anticipated **-\$1.5M** deficit at end FY26...  
    **Anticipate ending FY26 with \$1M+ carryover**
- **Anticipate ending FY27 with \$1M+ carryover**
- **Do not have to ask legislature for supplemental FY26 funds, nor additional funds for FY27, nor potentially, for FY28 (? Can get creative about building blocks!)**



# Budget Success Outcomes

## Because we have a positive budget:

- Allowed us to move forward with Promotions, ASIs, Incentive Awards  
5 Promotions, 7 ASIs, 15 Incentive Awards (bonuses)  
Created structure around this process: 2x yearly (December, June)
- Can recruit & fill 3 science vacancies
- Can spend \$ hats, office upgrades (filtered water bottle station, dino exhibit in lobby, space planning), equipment (bookstore copier)
- Can weather economic headwinds – 5% General Fund cut?
- Have breathing room: Focus on improving our UGS culture
  - Employee connections & events, train up next line of future leaders



# UGS Strategic Planning - 'Return to Mission'

- **Build Alignment with Mission**
  - What does our statute say UGS does- And for whom?
- **Align Our Work to Our Mission**
- **Align Staffing to Work/Mission**
- **What does the 'ideal UGS' cost? (Personnel)**
- **Create permanent, secure funding**
- **Alignment Shifts- What needs to change?**



## Strategic Planning Progress:

- Envisioned a vibrant and healthy future for UGS
- Aligning our work with our statutory mission
- Defining our 'Strategic Imperatives' - What we focus on
- Secured stable financial support for UGS
- Deploying those funds responsibly

**UGS has taken responsibility for our own financial success,  
and charted a secure financial future!**



## Legislative Session Goals

- **\$750K adjustment to Restricted Account Appropriation**
- **No other building blocks this year**
- **“Clean Up Bill” / Intent Language**
- **Several proposals: Deep brine well, Megablock funding (?)**
- **Spend this session making connections (“meet and greet”) and telling UGS’ story – Value proposition (ROI article in January *Survey Notes*)**
- **Maps on the Hill today**
- **UGS Presentation to Natural Resources Environment & Agriculture Committee on Friday, January 30, 8:30 am**



# Intent Language (Changes to UGS Statutes)

## Add groundwater, wetlands to our statute

### HB157 - lines 870-876 "Powers of the Survey"

- (i) Assist as requested by state and local agencies to measure, analyze, and report on the quantity, quality, and seasonal and long-term viability of a groundwater and surface water resource in the state;
- (j) provide data that supports scientific understanding, resource planning, and resource development related to groundwater and surface water;
- (k) assess the function, distribution, and ecological characteristic of a wetland to regional hydrology, historic change, and resource capacity to enhance resource management or a planning effort;



# Intent Language – Board Make Up

The board consists of seven members appointed by the governor....In addition to the requirements of Section 79-2-203, the members shall have the following qualifications:

- (a) one member knowledgeable in the field of geology as applied to the practice of **civil-engineering geology**;
  - (b) **fourthree** members knowledgeable and representative of various segments of the mineral industry or energy industry throughout the state, such as hydrocarbons, **geothermal**, solid fuels, metals, and industrial minerals;
  - (c) ~~one member knowledgeable of the economic or scientific interests of the mineral industry in the state about the economic and scientific focus of areas over which the survey has duties or powers under Section 79-3-202;~~  
**and**
  - (d) **one member knowledgeable about groundwater or water resources;**  
**and**(d)
  - (e) ~~one member who is:~~ (i) interested in the goals of the survey; and (ii) from the public at large.
- (3) ~~The director of the School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration is an ex officio member of the board but without any voting privileges.~~



## External Engagement

- **Sen. Curtis' Policy aides visiting Friday**
- **EarthMRI, Meetings w/ USGS Director Ned Mamula, WA DC:**
  - **Mike Vanden Berg, Andrew Rupke**
- **AASG Spring Liaison, Washington DC – February (Darlene)**
- **Intermountain West Coalition - April, Tucson**
  - **Stefan, Darlene**
- **University Fellowship opportunities?**



## Budget Success!

**Our budget corrective actions have been successful!**

- We were anticipating a **(-\$1M)** budget deficit
- Instead ended FY25 with a \$1M+ carryover
- Will end FY26 with a +\$1M carryover
- Anticipate ending FY27 with +\$1M carryover

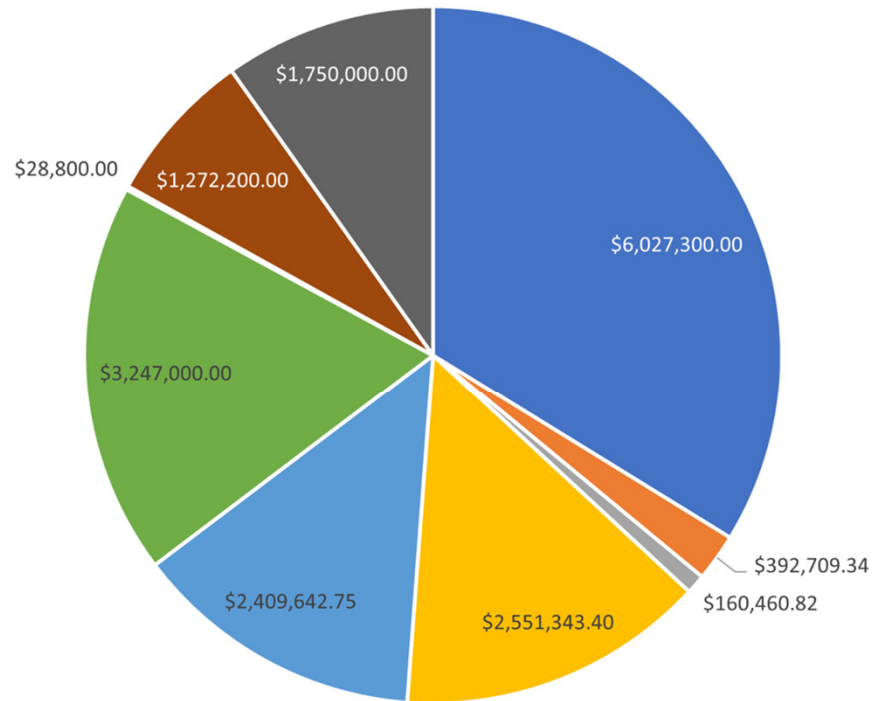
**What did we change?**

- Committed to focus on our statute and mission
- Performed & billed to our grants: Recovered \$300,000!
- Proposal Go/No Go kickoff meetings
- Staffing adjustments: UGS is 10% smaller (94 to 85 people) - mostly grad school, retirement(s), small but strategic RIF



# FY26 Budget Breakdown

UGS FY26 Budget Breakdown



- General Funds
- Federal Funds
- Land Exchange
- Dedicated Credits
- Transfers
- Non-Lapse
- Expendible Receipts
- Mineral Lease Appropriation
- Geothermal Buidling Block 1x



# FY27 Financial Outlook

REVENUE	LOW OUTSIDE FUNDING ESTIMATE	MID OUTSIDE FUNDING ESTIMATE	HIGH OUTSIDE ESTIMATE
GF (1000)	6,127,300	6,127,300	6,127,300
Potential on-going GF reduction in FY27 (\$?)			
GF Restricted - UGS Oil, Gas, & Mining (1137)	3,247,000	3,247,000	3,247,000
GF Restricted - LEDA	28,800	28,800	28,800
Outside Funding-Grants & Contracts	3,600,000	3,865,000	4,130,000
Bookstore	200,000	200,000	200,000
Non-Lapsing GF	2,680,000	2,680,000	2,680,000
<b>UNADJUSTED REVENUE TOTAL</b>	<b>15,883,100</b>	<b>16,148,100</b>	<b>16,413,100</b>
<b>REVENUE ADJUSTMENTS</b>			
Critical Mineral Carry-Forward	(150,000)	(150,000)	(150,000)
GF - Operation Gigawatt Geothermal - 1X	(1,080,000)	(1,080,000)	(1,080,000)
BSF Carry-Forward	(136,000)	(136,000)	(136,000)
Pass Through Adjustment	(300,000)	(300,000)	(300,000)
<b>Adjustment Total</b>	<b>(1,666,000)</b>	<b>(1,666,000)</b>	<b>(1,666,000)</b>
<b>Adjusted Revenue Total</b>	<b>14,217,100</b>	<b>14,482,100</b>	<b>14,747,100</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>			
AA Personnel Services (includes 3 vacancies)	11,585,000	11,585,000	11,585,000
FY27 P4P	106,000	106,000	106,000
BB Travel/In State	110,000	110,000	110,000
CC Travel/Out of State	60,000	60,000	60,000
DD Current Expense	750,000	750,000	750,000
EE Data Processing Current Expense	600,000	600,000	600,000
FF Data Processing Capital Expenditure	-	-	-
GG Capital Expenditure	150,000	150,000	150,000
HH Other Charges/Pass Through	300,000	300,000	300,000
<b>UNADJUSTED EXPENDITURE TOTAL</b>	<b>13,661,000</b>	<b>13,661,000</b>	<b>13,661,000</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE ADJUSTMENTS</b>			
Pass Through Adjustment	(300,000)	(300,000)	(300,000)
Critical Mineral Spending	(150,000)	(150,000)	(150,000)
Operations Gigawatt Geothermal Spending	(250,000)	(250,000)	(250,000)
BSF Spending Activity	(136,000)	(136,000)	(136,000)
<b>Expenditures Adjustment Total</b>	<b>(836,000)</b>	<b>(836,000)</b>	<b>(836,000)</b>
<b>Adjusted Expenditure Total</b>	<b>12,825,000</b>	<b>12,825,000</b>	<b>12,825,000</b>
<b>End-of-Year Balance</b>	<b>1,392,100</b>	<b>1,657,100</b>	<b>1,922,100</b>

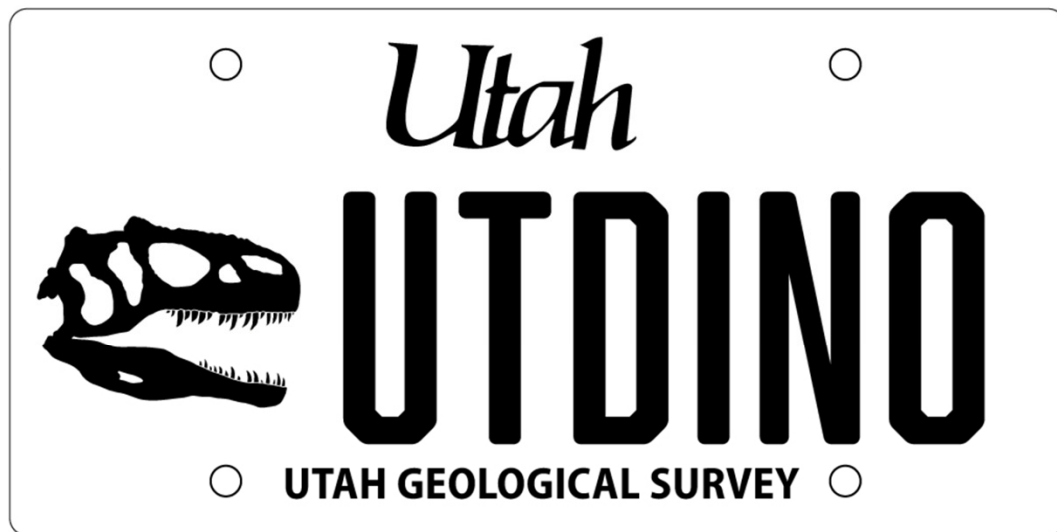
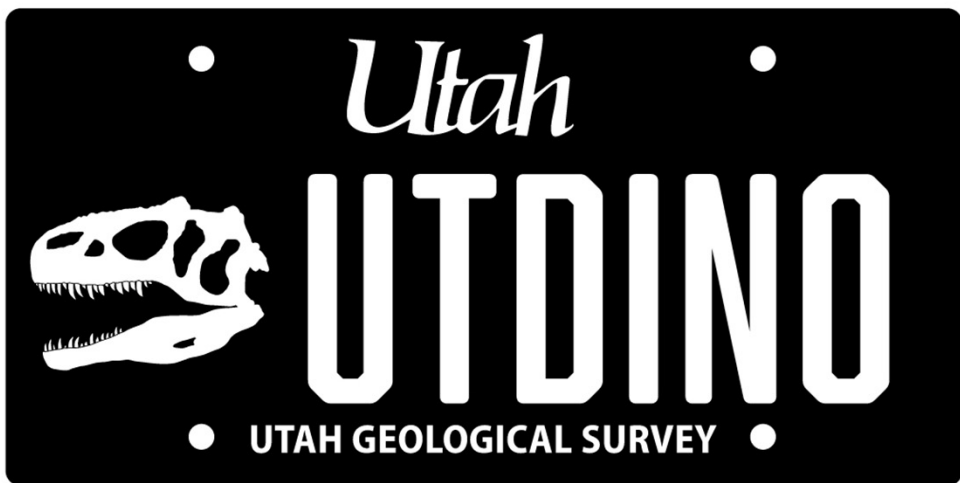


## Discussion Items:

- License Plate (Ben)
- University Fellowship opportunities (Stefan)
- Upcoming announcements
- Board Field trip – SE Utah, Dates? (Stefan)



## UGS License Plate Effort



## Discussion Items:

- License Plate (Ben Dlin)
- University Fellowship opportunities (Stefan Kirby)
- Upcoming announcements (Pending NDAs)
- Board Field trip – SE Utah, Dates, Itinerary (Stefan Kirby)



# Thanks for all you do!



## DIVISIONS



## OFFICES



# DNR WE ARE

We protect and enhance Utah's natural resources for current and future generations.



**OUR MISSION**  
The Utah Department of Natural Resources ensures the quality of life of Utah residents by managing and protecting the state's natural resources by:

- Enhancing the certainty and security of Utah's water
- Improving the health and resilience of our lands, resources, watersheds and Wildlife
- Advancing the stewardship of our public lands and natural history
- Elevating outdoor recreation
- Expanding Utah's energy and minerals portfolio

## OUR CORE VALUES

